

HALESOWEN CHRONICLE



Thursday, January 31, 2013

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Veltz are raring

Team ready to get going again after snow thaws

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Hundreds join rally on college sackings

HUNDREDS of people from across the country joined in a rally in support of a maths lecturer and three others sacked from Halesowen College.

David Muritu wants to return to work and is considering an employment tribunal after dismissal in December.

The college defended the sacking, saying it was due to a "consistent failure to carry out the fundamental part of the job as a lecturer". At the weekend, about 250 people protested and marched through the town as the college had an open day.

Many protesters were teaching union members who came from as far as Bristol, Chesterfield and London.

They walked for 40 minutes through the town waving banners and chanting support for Mr Muritu, as well as three other dismissed teachers.

In the evening, they met at Halesowen library to discuss next steps.

Mr Muritu said: "This is a moment which has struck a chord with many public sector workers across the country."

The college says Mr Muritu did not perform to standards expected but the lecturer says he was rated "good" in the last three observations on his teaching. A petition calling for Mr Muritu to be reinstated was signed by 1,100 people.

Auto firm's 20 jobs hope

AUTOMOTIVE parts distributor CES (UK) is creating 20 jobs with the opening of a new branch in Halesowen.

The company is not yet revealing exactly where it will be located. The new branch will serve the west of Birmingham.

"We're delighted to be opening our newest branch," said human resources manager Joanne Warren.

OUTCRY AT BID TO CONVERT OLD MILL

by Andrew Turton

PLANS to convert an 18th century mill in Halesowen into a children's home have sparked concerns from heritage bosses, fire officials and residents.

English Heritage has objected to the proposals for Lutley Mill saying the renovations would be "unsuited" for the historic landmark. And around 200 people have signed a petition demanding council officers refuse the change of use application for the Grade II listed building, in Hayley Green.

The four-storey watermill, off Lutley Lane, has previously been used as a private residence, according to details submitted to Dudley Council.

Dudley developer Madisun Residential Ltd is behind the scheme led by directors Rachel Weston and Carl Skelding.

In a letter to Dudley Council's planning department, Rachel Weston said: "We want to maintain the existing character of the building, so it will stay as a friendly, warm and cosy environment for the young people that will be living at the property."

She added no internal or external changes will be made to the building as part of the project.

Historic

But English Heritage historic buildings inspector Alan Taylor, in a letter to the council, said the body objected to the application on the grounds the building "seems unsuited to the intense wear and tear of an institutional use".

West Midlands Fire Service officer Michael Nicklin said the authority also objected to the change of use because the safety escape routes out of the building and the proposed fire system were both "not suitable".

Halesowen councillor Ken Turner is among those who have written objection letters to the planning department to air their concerns.

Councillor Turner added: "It is a building of major significance and it is a protected property. There is the mill wheel and deep running water nearby so you have to consider the safety of the children."

Dozens of residents have now written into object to the application.

"The use of the buildings and land are likely to have an impact upon character of the property," states one letter of objection submitted to the council.

A decision on the scheme will be made in the coming weeks.

New site is in sights of Olympic gym

BOSSSES at a Halesowen gym famed for producing Olympic star Kristian Thomas, has revealed it is considering another potential site - closer to its long-term Halesowen home.

Earls Gymnastics Club had unveiled plans to move to bigger premises in Nether-ton to meet the demand of its growing membership.

But this week, the club signalled it was also looking at relocating to a former go-karting track in Dudley Road, Halesowen.

In a supporting statement to a planning application submitted to Dudley Council, agents Bryant Priest Newman said: "Earls Gymnastics Club has been looking for suitable premises for four years without success."

"When assessing the suitability of property it is not just the physical size requirements and parking, but also location is a key factor."

"The travel time and distance for the 550 strong membership has to be considered."

Under the planned move, gymnastic equipment would be installed and a pit dug into the ground and filled with safety foam.

The number of staff would double from 11 to 22. The club has received a grant from Sport England to make the move, but has until March to spend the cash before it expires. The club's other planning application is to move to a large unit at Westminster Industrial Estate, in Cradley Road, which will secure its future.

Remembering The Holocaust



Dudley Holocaust Memorial commemoration service at Dudley College

YOUNG and old gathered for ceremonies across Dudley to mark Holocaust Memorial Day.

Services took place across the borough while people stood silently in tribute to those who were slaughtered.

Year 6 pupils of Belle Vue Primary School in Wordsley spent the morning listening to the recollections of Birmingham resident Lia Lesser who survived. The school's deputy headteacher Claire Davies said: "She spoke about her life and how the Holocaust affected her family."

Meanwhile, Dudley North MP Ian Austin was among those who organised the public commemoration at Dudley College. Mr Austin said: "This event was about remembering those who died and also thanking those local heroes, such as Frank Foley and the many other war veterans who I have met, who risked their lives to save others."

Dudley's mayor Melvyn Mottram and the Bishop of Dudley also attended the service, which was run with the help of Dudley Students' Union. Holocaust survivor Eva Clarke spoke at the event.

The Bishop of Dudley and council leader Dave Sparks also spoke at the event, which included a contribution from students from Bishop Milner Catholic School who visited



Survivor Eva Clarke at the service

Auschwitz as part of the Holocaust Educational Trust's Lessons from Auschwitz programme.

Olivia Marks-Woldman, chief executive of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust said: "The day is about learning from the past to build a better future."

Men used unit as a factory for vodka

A DUDLEY man has been given a suspended jail sentence for his role at an "alcohol factory" making potentially lethal vodka.

A unit was hired using a sham contract storage firm called CPST, a judge heard.

But it produced bogus Arctic Ice vodka using potentially harmful 96 per cent pure industrial alcohol normally found in anti-freeze as its base ingredient, Birmingham Crown Court was told.

Mr Hal Watson, prosecuting, said there was a risk to those involved and people going near the plant as well as a potential health risk to anyone drinking the vodka.

There were 2,572 filled bottles of Arctic Ice, 8,400 empty and 67,500 bottle caps. At least £75,000 duty was due if it was fit to drink.

Michael Woodcock, aged 52, a builder of Greswold Street, West Bromwich, fitted out the unit and built the still. He was jailed for 12 months.

Odd job man Alex Rollason, 19, of Halesowen Road, Old Hill, who worked for eight days, was seized along with driver Gavin Berrow, 42, of Amblecote Road, Brierley Hill, who was paid £200-a-load for deliveries.

They got four-month jail sentences suspended for 12 months with 200 hours unpaid work. All admitted conspiracy to evade duty.

● Lethal - page 2

Shop raided for third time

A DUDLEY shop owner says he feels helpless to stop thieves after his store was targeted by raiders for the third time in six months.

Raiders are thought to have used a pick-up truck to smash into Costcutters in Clarence Street, Upper Gornal on Sunday morning. Although they demolished the wall and got to a cashpoint, inside the Clarence Street store, the raiders were unable to break the ATM lock and fled empty-handed. Owner Seliah Bala says he was targeted twice last August.

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Shoplifter gets two year store ban



Richard Lawley

A PROLIFIC shoplifter has been banned from entering any Spar, Boots or Co-op store in Dudley for two years. Leaflets featuring Richard Lawley's image are to be distributed and anyone who sees him acting suspiciously is asked to call police. Dudley magistrates were told Lawley, aged 33, was arrested outside Boots at the

Merry Hill centre on January 3 as he tried to walk out with aftershave worth £86.50. Lawley, of no fixed address, was charged with two thefts at Spar, High Street, Lye. On September 30 he stole £42.68 worth of cheese and bacon and on October 5 he took chicken and sausages worth £15. On December 12, he also

took power tools worth £19.99 at Home Bargains, Brierley Hill. Magistrates sentenced him to 40 weeks jail and gave him a Criminal Anti-Social Behaviour Order (Crasbo) banning him from any Spar, Boots and Co-operative store in Dudley borough. Pc Lydia Howard said: "Should he try ignoring the

bans, he'll be arrested and put before the court and face further punishment." She added: "Leaflets featuring his image will also be distributed locally making everyone aware of his Crasbo and I'd encourage anyone who spots Lawley doing anything he shouldn't be to contact Dudley Police by calling 101."

Fake vodka made with 'lethal' anti-freeze mix

TO THE untrained eye they looked like any other off-the-shelf bottle of vodka. But the Arctic Ice being sold at stores across the region actually contained a potentially lethal level of pure alcohol.

Funding is secured to help train youngsters

STOURBRIDGE College has secured funding to help 1,000 employed young adults in Dudley borough.

Cash will be available to help small businesses provide training for workers.

The cash was secured as part of a partnership with Calderdale College.

Work Place Learning is funded by the European Social Fund and co-financed by the Skills Funding Agency with the West Yorkshire Consortium of Colleges accountable for driving the £55 million project forward.

It promotes 'in work' training for employed people who are looking to progress to higher level qualifications and build on their existing skills. The partnership delivers across Yorkshire and the Humber, East & West Midlands and in the North East & North West of England.

Stourbridge College principal Lynette Cutting said: "We are always looking for additional funding which might be available to deliver training for young people in line with the Local Enterprise Partnership's focus on ensuring we have the right skills in the region to support our thriving economy."

"We're delighted to have been awarded this contract."

It was the kind normally used in anti-freeze, cleaning fluids or solvents.

Three men paid for risking their lives and those of others with an alcohol plant similar to one in which five died in a blast days earlier.

Michael Woodlock, aged 52, Gavin Berrow, 42, and Alex Rollason, 19, were caught as Revenue and Customs officers swooped on the illicit still in an industrial unit off Birmingham's Inner Ring Road, Brewery Street, Aston, on July 13 2011.

The raid, codenamed Operation Red Squirrel, followed a hunt for the source of fake Arctic Ice vodka laced with high levels of deadly methanol found at off-licences in the region.

Health officials knew of at least two people complaining of illness after drinking it.

Packaging

Bottles were found by trading standards officers at shops in Staffordshire, the West Midlands, Shropshire and four other counties.

Fake duty numbers on packaging showed it was from the Birmingham still and another not traced.

The £45,000 plant could produce up to 12,000 litre bottles at a time. It was sold at £45-a-case, providing a £127,000-a-load profit by not paying duty normally due.

Investigators who pounced about three weeks after a rental agreement on the premises was signed found 2,500 bottles of fake Arctic Ice and thousands of litres of 96 per cent industrial alcohol, or methanol, normally used in anti-freeze or cleaning fluids.

It was in 1,000-litre industrial bulk containers delivered by articulated lorry shortly before the raid.

There were also 67,500 bottle caps and 8,500 empty bottles, a labelling



Michael Woodlock, aged 52



Alex Rollason, aged 19



Gavin Berrow, aged 42



One of the bottles seized



Vodka-making equipment at the Birmingham plant

machine and other paraphernalia.

Michael Woodlock arrived as the raid started. He was with Gavin Berrow and Alex Rollason, who received four month sentences, suspended for twelve months, at Birmingham Crown Court.

They must also do 200 hours unpaid work. Woodlock, of Greswold Street, West Bromwich, was jailed for a year after admitting being paid £400-a-week by an unnamed person to find a suitable site for the plant.

He also admitted setting it up and organising paperwork. Berrow, of Ambleside Road, Brierley Hill, was paid £200-a-time to deliver equipment and Rollason of Halesowen Road, Old Hill,

Five flats at historic home are rejected

PLANS to convert a former 19th century glassmaker's home in the heart of Dudley into flats were refused by heritage chiefs who feared too many historical features would be removed.

An application for listing building consent for alterations is for the Wolverhampton Street Grade II listed terraced house, previously home to glass maker John Ranaud in 1871.

Dudley Council planning officer Nicholas Howell said, in a report, that there was no objection to the property being used as housing but they could not support alterations proposed.

The developer wanted to convert the first floor and offices on the second floor into five flats. The basement and outside would remain.

Changes to the first and second floors to create the flats included making an opening in one of the walls and blocking off two "historic door openings." Mr Howell said alterations did not preserve special architectural or historic interest.

Agent Timothy Armstrong, for the applicant, said original features such as the "beautiful feature staircase" and the rooflights would be retained.

Mistakes by nurse claim

A NURSE accused of making a series of mistakes with patients at Dudley's Russells Hall Hospital appeared at a misconduct hearing.

The Nursing and Midwifery Council panel was told Seema Faulkner switched off a monitor checking blood pressure of a patient with chest pains for nearly six hours in October 2009.

Accused of making other blunders, she admitted giving intravenous blood when untrained, failing to check a blood sugar measurement, and not checking a patient's blood pressure but denied the rest of the accusations.

Joy at museum

STEADILY rising visitor numbers are being celebrated at Kidderminster's Museum of Carpet.

Since opening on October 19 there were 1,450 paying customers and hundreds of others visited for functions at the museum buildings based at Stour Vale Mill, originally built 1855.

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Plans for housing approved

FORMER industrial land in Dudley has come a step closer to being turned into more than 30 homes after plans passed the final hurdle.

Outline approval for the old Redhill Works, Prospect Row, had been given but developer Reirse Ryan needed permission over appearance, layout, scale of the homes and landscaping.

The scheme will have 29, two-bedroom houses and five three-bedroom houses on acul-de-sac layout. They would have gardens with small patios.

There will be a 61-space car park for residents and visitors. Trees will be planted around the site.

In a report, submitted with the planning application, the developer said: "The proposal will provide new residential accommodation and remove a currently vacant and derelict site."

"It will have benefits for the appearance of the area as well as providing much needed accommodation suitable for those on lower incomes."

One letter of objection had been submitted from a nearby firm which was concerned the development could restrict its business.

New forums set to start

THE first round of the new community forums in Dudley are being held this month.

The public meetings have replaced the outdated area committees and run through February.

The nine forums will focus on issues raised by the public, making it easier for people to report and discuss them with the council and elected members. People can drop in and have their say between February 11 and 20, from 6.30pm.

Councillor David Sparks, leader of Dudley Council, said: "This is a new way for people to have their say on what goes on in the borough and how the council can play a part in it."

Church raided

THEIVES caused damage estimated at £900 and stole a large-screen television during from a church in Kidderminster.

The thieves forced their way into the building at the rear of Baxter United Reformed Church in the Bull Ring.

Care homes scheme for site of derelict club

A FORMER club site in Stourbridge will be used to build four care homes under plans submitted to Dudley Council.

The derelict building in Amblecote High Street has lain empty for about a decade and people living nearby have long called for the site to be revamped.

Proposals to demolish Amblecote War Memorial Club and build four detached care homes for young adults have gone to planning bosses.

Each building would offer four en suite bedrooms for young adults as well as com-

munal lounges and a kitchen. New jobs created would range from care assistants to kitchen staff.

Agent Tommy Wong said in a report: "This proposal represents an opportunity to provide a high quality and well design Care Homes which will help to meet the growing need for care bed spaces."

"The site's unique position, along a main transport route and within a residential area, close to the centre of Stourbridge make it an ideal location for such a facility. The proposed care homes will provide a

range of employment opportunities, from ancillary staff posts such as administration, maintenance, laundry, domestic and kitchen staff to care assistants," he added. The club has suffered vandalism, fire and weather damage.

Includes

It was founded in 1921 for ex-service-men but closed in 2002, due to lack of bookings and activities.

It was on the market for three years and had a guide price of £175,000 before it was

sold in September.

The site includes a bowling green and a car park.

Residents have been calling for action to clean up the site for a number of years saying that the building has become an eyesore on one of the main routes into Stourbridge town centre.

Plans were also submitted in 2009 to turn the site into a restaurant and cabaret but the scheme never got off the ground amid traffic concerns.

Brave former sailor Harold seeks medal after 70 years

PENSIONER Harold Tomlinson is applying for a medal to recognise his dangerous war-time work on the Arctic convoys – more than 70 years after his first heroic mission ended in a bill for his "Dad's Army" tin hat.

Mr Tomlinson, now aged 87, was one of the brave sailors who battled through freezing seas to deliver crucial supplies to Russia during the Second World War.

He worked as a gun layer – who controls the angle of elevation of a gun – aboard HMS Dorchester, a battleship that was protecting the convoys, and watched in horror as German submarines sank other ships in the flotilla as he fired on the enemy.

More than 3,000 seamen were killed in the 78 convoys that delivered supplies to the Red Army.

Now he is to apply for a medal after Prime Minister David Cameron announced in Parliament that the men who helped take vital fuel, food and munitions to the Eastern Front will get an Arctic Convoys Star.

Proud

Mr Tomlinson, a great grandfather and widower of Musk Lane West, Gornal, said he joined the navy near the start of the war after an incident when he was in the Home Guard and the Germans dropped bombs on the waterworks in Dudley.

"I took my tin hat off and threw it on top of an incendiary bomb and was really proud of myself," he said.

"I thought I'd get some recognition for it – but all I got was a chit saying I owed for the cost of the tin hat."

"I can't remember how much it was but I thought it was disgusting."

"So I decided I'd join the navy and see if I could get recognition another way."

Mr Tomlinson went on to survive the gruelling journey to Russia aboard

by Louise Jew

HMS Dorchester. "We were circling the convoy to protect it but we would look across and see another of our ships blown up – the German's were devils at watching until we were out of the way," he said.

"We'd just see a big black blotch from the smoke and know that people were losing their lives and it was disaster. We fired on German ships and submarines and sank some of them."

"It was terrifying and every time a wave came over the ship, we had to scrape the ice off the guns."

"But if you put your hands on it, it would burn your fingers off."

Dudley widow Phyllis Coyle, aged 84, carried on a campaign launched by her late husband, Mick, for those who took part in the arctic convoys to get the recognition they deserved.

Mr Coyle, who died aged 85 two years ago, was a stoker with the Royal Navy from 1942 to 1947 and sailed with four convoys to Russia.

And, following the success of the campaign, Mr Tomlinson plans to apply for the Arctic Convoys Star.

He said: "I've tried to blot the memory from my mind – but there are still times I wake up and it comes back vividly. It's taken 70 years but I think it's right we now get that recognition."



Harold Tomlinson who is only now being given a medal



Uniformed Harold, aged 17, when he joined the Navy



The battleship HMS Dorchester on which Harold served helping to protect convoys from German attacks

NEWS

in brief

Nightclub boss is fined over licence

A NIGHTCLUB boss could face jail and a £10,000 fine after failing to hold the correct licences to play music.

Inspectors found Code nightclub in Dudley was playing music without holding a Phonographic Performance Ltd licence.

Mr Justice Floyd imposed a ban on music being played on any premise run by the nightclub's owner Gulzaman Khan until he brings his licence up to date.

Mr Khan was ordered to pay £1,609 in legal costs in

999 service given praise from MP

AN MP has spoken of her admiration for ambulance staff after a visit coincided with bad weather.

Stourbridge MP Margot James was making a pre-arranged tour of West Midlands Ambulance Service's headquarters recently as the snow began to fall.

The service received more than 2,600 emergency calls – an increase of nearly 14 per cent.

Miss James said: "We in the Black Country are extremely fortunate to have a service we can be confident of."

Have your say in protecting area

RESIDENTS in a Worcestershire village are being asked to help draw up a blueprint to protect the area.

Council chiefs are preparing "a character appraisal" for the Areley Kings Conservation Area.

Wyre Forest District Council would like to hear from residents and firms about important features of the area.

£2m to improve maternity units

MORE than £2 million will be spent on improving hospital maternity units across the region, under new plans.

Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust received £41,000 for a refurbishment of its inpatient unit at Russells Hall Hospital.

The Government grant will also be used to upgrade facilities in Wolverhampton and Walsall.

Charity shop raid

BURGLARS caused around £2,000 damage after using a pole and bricks to smash into Scope in Worcester Street, Kidderminster, stealing two acoustic guitars worth

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NEWS

THE BEST
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RHODES

SO THAT'S it. In clear, concise language that no-one could possibly misunderstand, the die is cast. The British people will be given a simple, straightforward choice on our future membership of the EU. It is in or out. Or possibly inish or outish. Sort of. A bit. Depending...

□□□□□□□□

THE reality is David Cameron is standing on the quayside, urging us to step aboard the good ship EU which, even as he talks, is casting off and moving away from us. By the time we get this promised referendum the Eurozone nations at the heart of today's EU will have become a superstate, in effect one nation with one central bank and one economic policy. Simply by standing still, the UK will move away. David Cameron, if he is still PM, will then proudly announce that he has negotiated a new relationship with Brussels and a grateful nation will vote to stay in (even though we will actually be out).

□□□□□□□□

DURING the wintry spell cars, vans, lorries and the eBay courier, gawd bless him, all managed to get up the farm track to Chateau Rhodes. But the Royal Mail didn't. I am reminded of the graffiti in a post office in New York. On the wall a famous inscription in praise of postal workers declares: "Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds." Underneath, someone wrote: "So what is it, then?"

□□□□□□□□

MORE telly anachronisms. A reader claims that in the excellent drama Spies of Warsaw (BBC4) David Tennant was driving a version of the classic Citroen Light 15 which was not produced until well after the war. Mind you, this seems a small niggle, bearing in mind that not so long ago we saw David Tennant arriving in ancient Pompeii in a 1950s police telephone box.

Don't miss Peter Rhodes every Monday to Friday in your Express & Star

Pupils praised in face of slide down the table

EDUCATION bosses in Dudley were have praised pupils and teachers despite the borough slipping down the school league tables.

Dudley fell 43 places down the national rankings for GCSE results, from 67 to 110. Today's figures showed that the overall percentage of pupils gaining at least five A*-C grades at GCSE including English and maths, was 56.1 per cent, down from 58.5 per cent. The floor target for secondary schools includes gaining between five A*-C grades at GCSE. These should include core subjects of English and Maths.

But education boss Councillor Tim Crumpton said the number of pupils achieving five or more A*-C grades, which may include English or maths but not both, had improved. The figure was 83.2 per cent of compared to 81 per cent in the previous year. He said: "I would like to congratulate all pupils and am extremely pleased to see their hard work and dedication paying off. The teachers and parents should also take great pride in their support of the young people throughout."

Sank

Meanwhile the average A-level point score per candidate also dropped from 741.7 to 683.5 in 2012, meaning the borough's position sank from 49 to 102nd nationally.

Despite the borough's dip, it did have two schools in the top 200 most-improved state secondary schools for proportion of pupils gaining five A*-C grades. They were the Earls High School, Halesowen, which was 62nd and Ellowes Hall Sports College, Gornal, 148th.

Hagley Catholic High School, Hagley, was also named in the top 200 state schools for A-levels, as the average point score per candidate, including equivalent qualifications was 981.1, which also placed it fourth out of all schools in Worcestershire for A-level performance. Meanwhile in Sandwell pupils achieved the borough's best-ever GCSE examination results which saw it rise 10 places in the national standings. The dramatic rise saw it move up to 128th out of 151 local authorities.



Head Andy Griffiths with, back, from left, Amrit Dulay, Hannah Cheeseman, Luke Millard, centre, Bethany Brown, Isaac Vassell, James Enright and, front, Kirsten Wilkes

PUPILS and staff have been celebrating at Ellowes Hall Sports College in Dudley as it was named top in the borough for its GCSE results.

It was ranked at 148th in the 200 most-improved state secondary schools table.

It is for the proportion of pupils gaining five A* to C grades.

Last year 85 per cent of pupils achieved five A* to C grades at GCSE or equivalent including English and maths at the school, in Lower Gornal.

Head Andy Griffiths said he was pleased to see the school top of the table in the borough for GCSEs. He added: "It's not something we've done before. It's been a decent journey for us to get to this point."

"We were jointly top last year so we're delighted to be there on our own now."

The school was found to be outstanding by Ofsted two months ago.

Ex-sports bar boss sold fake footie top

A FORMER sports bar owner in Stourbridge has been fined for selling a fake England football shirt to a trading standards officer during a sting.

Wayne Etheridge, aged 43, had been due to face two other charges of possessing 112 counterfeit shirts in the lead-up to the 2010 World Cup but these were dropped.

Dudley Magistrates Court heard Etheridge, who used to run The Cross Inn Sports Bar, Glass House Hill, had sold the shirt to officer Laura Fisher.

The shirt was among others later sent to Umbro's head of brand protection who said, due to its lack of quality, it was fake. Ms Fisher said she had been at the pub at about lunchtime on September 12, 2010 and had seen a sign advertising the football shirts for £27.50 each. A genuine shirt sold for about £44. Etheridge was found guilty of two Trade Marks Act charges. He was fined £200 with £85 costs and a £15 victim surcharge.

Quick response

A HIGH-performance car has been donated to volunteer medics to attend 999 calls more quickly in Birmingham.

The FastAid Community First Responders team, trained by West Midlands Ambulance Service, took delivery of the MG6 GT this week.

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Map showing location near High St, Forge Lane, Cradley Heath, and Brierley Hill.

Club to get a share of £200,000

A SPORTS club near Stourbridge is to get a share of a £200,000 to fund expansion plans including better pavilions, changing rooms and heating systems.

Envile Athletics Social Club in Hall Drive, Envile, will receive £50,000 from Sport England as part of the refurbishment scheme.

Wooden changing rooms will go at Envile and be replaced with a brick building including disabled facilities, and a new heating system.

Springhill bosses said they were "delighted".

Members faced being barred from their league after the Staffordshire Club Cricket Championship raised concerns on finances and lack of facilities, as they operated out of two portable steel cabins.

Daniel Kinsey, club secretary, said: "This is the first major step towards getting the new pavilion."

Cannock Rugby Union Football Club, Springhill Cricket Club, Lower Penn, near Wolverhampton and Alrewas Cricket Club, near Lichfield are also receiving a share of the funding.

Work can now start on four new changing rooms.

Appeal for funds

MEDICAL staff at Dudley's Russells Hall Hospital have launched an appeal for £3,000 to refurbish the relatives' room. They hope to pay for redecoration. Call Margaret Chawro on 01384 456111 extension 2323 for details.

Pilot's order to jump that probably kept Richard alive

THEY are legendary war stories that have been retold many times in books, documentaries and blockbuster films.

But for former RAF navigator Richard Corser they were a defining part of his life. Mr Corser died last week aged 90. Today, his proud family reveal the remarkable story of his time in action and as a Second World War prisoner of war.

It is a story that includes some of the most iconic moments and faces of the conflict - the Great Escape, the Wooden Horse and pilot Douglas Bader.

It begins with his role as a navigator in an RAF Wellington, based at RAF Honington in Suffolk. He joined the RAF in 1940 after first being in the Home Guard, serving in No 9 Bomber Squadron.

A year later, aged 19, his aircraft was hit over Germany and he was ordered to jump from his Wellington. Ironically, after he and a radio operator bailed out, the pilot decided to attempt to fly on and the aircraft managed to limp back to base.

Daring

Given the low survival rate among RAF bomber crews, the order to jump probably saved Mr Corser's life. Instead of continuing his job as a navigator, he started a four-year stint in some of the Nazi's most notorious prisoner of war camps.

Most of his time as a PoW was spent at Stalag Luft Three at Sagan, in what is now part of Poland. It was home to some of the war's most daring escape attempts and Mr Corser played his part in helping.

His knowledge of German was utilised to translate broadcasts on hidden radios.

He helped with the famous Wooden Horse escape from the camp in 1943. He was one of the PoWs who helped dispose of sand from the tunnel, dug beneath a vaulting horse. One of the prisoners he knew was Carry On



Richard Corser in his flight suit before becoming a navigator



Richard Corser in the RAF aged 18



Richard celebrates his 90th birthday in 2012

actor Peter Butterworth. After the war, Butterworth, who was one of the prisoners vaulting the horse during the escape, was ironically turned down for a role in the film *The Wooden Horse*.

Eric Williams, who was one of the three escapees who made it back to Britain, also signed a first edition copy of his book about the escape for his old friend.

Mr Corser also knew many of those who escaped from Stalag Luft Three in the Great Escape of 1944, which was made into a Hollywood movie in 1963 starring Steve McQueen, James Garner, and Richard Attenborough.

The tunnel was dug in the officer's compound and 76 men got away before it was discovered.

Fifty of the 73 escapees that were recaptured were executed by the Nazis.

It was during this time Mr Corser met the famous fighter ace Douglas Bader, sharing the same hut with him for a time. In 1945 he was among the thousands of PoWs who were forced by the Germans to march hundreds of miles across Europe ahead of the advancing Soviet Red Army to camps in Germany.

His son John, of Upper Gornal, explained: "It was obviously an ordeal for those who took part. My dad spoke of his horrific memories of the

conditions that they faced. It was cold and they had very limited rations.

"He was very proud of his time in the RAF and of what the bombers did to win the war. He was delighted that a memorial to Bomber Command was finally opened in London last year.

"He enjoyed watching the films about Stalag Luft Three and read extensively about the Second World War."

After being liberated by Allied troops, there was another twist to Mr Corser's early life on his return to Britain. His best friend in No 9 Bomber Squadron was a man called Eric Blackburn, from Irlam, Lancashire, who died during the war when his own bomber crashed in Lincolnshire.

Before his capture, Mr Corser had met Mr Blackburn's sister Marian, and on his return they married and produced six children.

John, aged 53, said: "The whole family is very proud of what he and my uncle did during the war." After training as a teacher, Mr Corser and his wife moved from Irlam to Wolverhampton in the late 1950s and then to Sedgley in 1963.

He was principal of the Sedgley Evening Institute for nearly 20 years in the 1970s and 1980s and was also a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society and a member of the Caterpillar Club for people whose lives were saved by parachute.

Geography

"My father had a great love of maps and all aspects of geography," said John. "Sport was also among his loves and he was a keen tennis player and played amateur rugby league."

Mr Corser specialised in remedial education and taught at a number of schools across the Black Country up until his retirement.

He loved to travel and made several visits to Germany in his later years and also visited his sister Heather in the United States where she had moved as a GI bride after the war.

He also helped with the Arcalian Players Dramatic Society based at High Arcal School. Marian died in 1998 and he later moved to Tettenhall. He leaves his second wife Betty, six children, 12 grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren.

NEWS

in brief

Time to nominate for mayor awards

THERE are still a few weeks left to nominate the borough's unsung heroes for the Mayor of Dudley's Civic Awards.

Residents are being urged to put forward those people they think have gone the extra mile in the community, to be honoured in the 10th annual awards before the closing date of February 18.

To nominate visit www.dudley.gov.uk or fill in a form available from borough libraries.

Winners and runners-up will be decided in March with prizes presented during a civic ceremony.

Anglers reeled in over killing Keith

ANGLERS have backed down in a row over the protection of a seal in the River Severn amid fears they wanted the creature shot.

Animal lovers and conservationists, including the RSPCA, condemned a bid by the Angling Trust to obtain a licence to kill the seal. The seal, nicknamed Keith.

Members of the Angling Trust said they will work with groups to find a solution.

Exhibition of art

AN exhibition of abstract art is going on display at Worcester Cathedral. The paintings can be viewed in the North Crypt from February 12 to 24. The Foundations of Remembrance exhibition is by Dan Roach.

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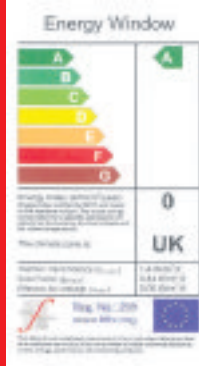
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NEWS

Private services bring in £70,000 for hospital

Would-be robber on CCTV



The man tries to grab the chain as the shop assistant hangs on to it

A SHOPWORKER'S finger was injured when a man tried to snatch a gold chain worth £2,700 from a Dudley jeweller's.

Police think the attempted robbery could be linked with a raid in which a £5,000 Rolex was stolen in Staffordshire on the same day.

The raids happened on October 17 but police have only now released the CCTV footage which show the would-be robber's face, appealing for information to track down the culprit.

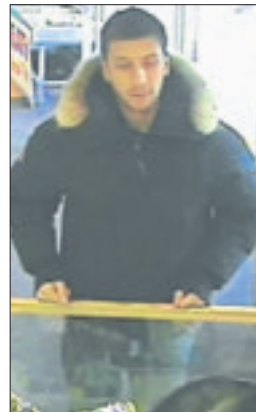
The suspect went into G&K Jewellers in Plaza Mall, High Street, Dudley, at around 10.10am on the day and asked to see the gold chain.

Shop assistant Gemma Jones, aged 24, was showing it to him, when he suddenly grabbed it and tried to run off.

Gemma was able to keep hold of it and he left empty-handed – but she suffered an injury to her finger.

At around 4pm the same day, the Rolex was stolen from City Jewellers in Market Street, Lichfield.

To help call police on 101.



The man at the jewellery counter moments before the robbery bid

DUDLEY'S main hospital has raised more than £70,000 income by offering patients private treatment, including procedures no longer available on the NHS, new figures show.

Twenty-four people have chosen to pay for outpatient appointments or minor operations at Dudley's Russells Hall since the scheme was launched last January.

Figures released by the hospital trust's information governance manager showed the income raised up until last month was £70,031.

Under the Care Plus programme, bosses provide services including cardiology, orthopaedics, plastic surgery and sports therapy to private patients.

Paula Clark, chief executive of the Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust, has pledged to put any profit back into NHS health care to develop services.

People interested in having a procedure done as a private patient need to get their GP to refer them to the hospital and free parking is available.

The hospital has also begun offering patients having NHS treatment the chance to book a private room.

They cost £80 per night and each one has its own shower room and television while some also have an iPod docking station and a DVD player.

A new agreement

A NEW partnership agreement has been signed between church leaders in the Midlands and Peru.

Bishop John Inge, from the Diocese of Worcester, and Bishop William Godfrey of Peru renewed the special friendship, 21 years after it was founded. A group from Worcester visited Peru in 2012 to discuss the relationship between the dioceses.

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LETTERS

Cameron musn't be fobbed off

RE: David Cameron and his promise of a referendum on Europe, I have never been asked if I wish to be a member.

What we were asked many years ago was if we wanted to be a member of the European Economic Community (EEC). This was to be an organisation whose aim was to make trade between the European countries easier to operate.

At that time we were trading with the whole of the World. I worked on projects which went to many countries including Russia, India, Europe and further. Once we joined the EEC business/trade outside Europe appeared to

evaporate. Initially the French appeared not to want us in.

By the time we became a member the Germans and the French had things all sown up. The Germans had the industry and the French the agriculture. As a result of this our industry went to the wall.

Steel plants such as those in Bilston and Round Oak were closed down. We no longer exported to the rest of the world (we had been sending buses to South America by the ship load). This was the start of the country moving backward.

The EEC evolved into a political

entity. We were forced to accept an inquisitorial legal system rather than our Common Law. We had to accept any law passed by the now European Community (EU) whether they suited us or not.

Let us hope our Prime Minister goes with a positive agenda not spouting, as some have in the past, I will show them what I want then leave us much weaker than when he went.

David Cameron go well prepared and do not be fobbed off with what the EU want us to accept.

D WINTERBORN
Dudley

Marvellous heart and lung centre

I HAVE just had a spell in the New Cross Heart & Lung centre for a valve replacement and bypass.

This is the NHS at its best. This centre is really marvellous, all the staff are kind, helpful and very efficient. I really couldn't have had any better care it was 1st class+.

Special thanks to Mr. Matuszewski and his team for my new lease of life.

Long live the NHS.
COLIN MARSH
Gornal Wood

Cheaper tickets

I HAVE just received a reminder to renew my bus pass.

It must cost more than a bomb to print and issue these passes.

Why can't the bus companies issue cheap tickets for shoppers. This would encourage more people to use the buses and visit shops.

M WILSON
Harding Street
Coseley

LETTERS to the Editor

POST

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Mystery of the lady with a snow shovel

I WOULD like to express my thanks to a wonderful young lady, whose name I should have got and two gentlemen who helped recover my car from Berrybush Gardens near Sedgley.

There is only one road that exits the estate, Arcal Street a steep incline and Dudley Council had not treated the road thus a lot of the residents would have been unable to leave the estate.

Recently my vehicle, a nice German model but the worst car ever in snow, was stranded, thus I thought it best to leave the vehicle there.

A couple of nights later my friend and I set about recovering the vehicle. Even with 60 years driving experience and almost 28 stone of masculinity between us, all our attempts to move the vehicle couldn't budge it, then suddenly a delightful young lady appeared with a shovel and not only set about digging us out.

Aided by two locals we managed to succeed, I would like to express my extreme gratitude to the two gents who also helped, but moreover I would like to contact the young lady, without whose "expertise" we would still be there.

MR GARY WYLDE, Woodsetton

Read the manual on tyres in winter

RE: Rear wheel drive is no use in the snow. Nonsense.

Read the manufacturers handbook, and fit winter tyres. If you want to get around safe in general winter conditions, and be able to drive up and down hills, brake safely etc in snow, then from my experience winter tyres will work as they are designed to, including in thick snow.

I've no idea how they work, but rest assured, they do, indeed unbelievably so.

After last year's snow, I've now fitted them to my wife's and daughter's cars as well as my rear-wheel drive. You cannot compromise on safety. If you do, then you should follow Mr Parker's advice, and do not go out in adverse conditions if you are not properly prepared.

I would repeat, read your car's handbook on driving in winter conditions.

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NEWS

Come and see colourful marine life at aquarium



Stacey Ward, assistant manager of aquarium house Forty Fathoms, displays the shop's new coral tank



Some of the marine life on show

EXOTIC marine life from around the globe is attracting customers to a Kidderminster aquarium.

Forty Fathoms, Greatfield Road is displaying species from across the world in two 10ft by 5ft, 20 inches deep tanks - one for saltwater corals and another for aquatic plants.

The marine life has come from locations as exotic as Indonesia and Singapore.

Manager Wez Sharif said trade had boosted as families from the town flocked to see the colourful displays. He said it has around 50 soft and hard corals. "They've come from all around

the world and they look wonderful." The shop owners invested "thousands" in the tanks and their contents, but Mr Sharif said it had all been worth it.

He said: "The reaction has been really good and it's pushed sales up. We have had a few people who have never been in before stop by to see the corals."

"We're getting lots of families and people who have never kept marine tanks before who are now asking how to keep them." The family-run aquarium also houses more than 300 species of fish - from cold water varieties to tropical - and around 100 other kinds of plants and corals.



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NEWS

Wheels windfall



Carnival queen Hannah Cornish and, from left, 1st Kidderminster Boys' Brigade's Charlie Tindell, Oliver Reah and James Cook

BOYS' Brigade members are travelling in style thanks to a £2,000 windfall from Kidderminster Carnival organisers.

The donation has enabled the Mitton Hall 1st Kidderminster brigade to replace its old minibus with a newer second-hand 17-seater.

The Brigade raised the remaining £4,000 to buy the vehicle.

Officer Graham Knight said the carnival donation had been a "major" boost.

He said: "We did not expect to raise the money so quickly and we are very, very grateful to the carnival for its assistance. If we didn't have a minibus it would have a major impact on the company as we also use it to take the boys to camps and weekly activities."

Kidderminster Carnival chairman Colin Hill said: "The committee is delighted to be able to give £2,000 to the brigade and is very grateful for the support its members gave to last year's carnival after being chosen as the main beneficiary." This year's carnival will take place at Brinton Park on Saturday June 22.

Extra staff taken on by service for vulnerable

EXTRA staff are being taken on to help hundreds of vulnerable families in Dudley get financial support and advice under new council plans.

Dudley Council is setting up a local welfare assistance scheme. It will replace the current Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans system run by the Department for Work and Pensions.

by Heather Large

The authority will receive an awards budget of £700,000 to run the programme.

Each year, around 8,000 applications are made by vulnerable people and groups in Dudley. Financial awards totalling nearly £800,000 are given out.

The council plans to take on three workers to assist with the extra workload created by the change.

Funding for the posts will be covered by a government grant. Salaries will range from £17,161 to £19,126.

Councillor Pete Lowe, said: "With reduced funding we know we will need to redesign the service in order

to best meet people's needs.

"Clearly with thousands of applications each year for the current scheme, the new responsibilities will result in a significantly increased workload. We will be creating three new customer service posts to help us meet the demands of this extra work."

The changes to the system are being made as part of the Government's national welfare reforms.

Meanwhile Dudley has been awarded cash to help more than 700 troubled families as part of a Government scheme aimed at tackling problems passed from generation to generation.

Author to guest at storytelling

A HALESOWEN author will be the special guest at a bedtime story event. Children are invited to Cradley Library in Colley Lane on January 31 dressed in their pyjamas to listen to Lee Howell. The reading will take place at 6pm.



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Round Oak was preparing to celebrate its 125th anniversary when the axe came



MP John Blackburn campaigned to save the works



A casting machine inside Round Oak Steel Works, Brierley Hill

Tea break came with news of steel works closure and 1,200 lost jobs

IT was a tea break Michael Lyon will never forget. The crane operator at Round Oak Steel Works was in the rest room with around 25 workmates when reports came through on the radio that their plant would be closing, with the loss of 1,200 jobs.

"It was the first we had heard about it," he says. "Apparently the union had known about it for some time. We were just totally shocked, there were quite a few swearwords and words about the union man. It wasn't very pleasant."

It is 30 years since Round Oak, the last major steel plant in the West Midlands, shut its doors for the last time.

Just a few years earlier, half of the Black Country had reverberated to the dull thud of the steel-making industry, the smoking chimneys of Round Oak, Brierley Hill, Patent Shaft Wednesbury, and Stewarts and Lloyds, Bilston, forming the backdrop to the Black Country skyline.

By Christmas 1982 they had all been consigned to history. Bilston had been the first to close in 1979, and Patent Shaft followed suit the following year.

But all the hopes that this rationalisation would secure the future of Round Oak, which had been preparing to celebrate its 125th anniversary, melted away like a lump of pig iron entering a furnace.

Michael, now 71, had been with the company for 14 years when the plant closed. His son Ian, who worked as an apprentice bricklayer at the works, also lost his job. "It was a fantastic place to work, I enjoyed going to work

by Mark Andrews

every day, I don't think there are a lot of people who can say that," he says.

"Everybody helped each other out, if anything went wrong, we all pulled together, you would never get anybody say 'that's not my job'."

"The bosses there would bend for you as well, they would try to help you, and then when they wanted a favour, you would give them the favour back."

Round Oak was founded in 1857 by the Earl of Dudley, as an outlet for the pig iron from the blast furnaces which proliferated the area. At the height of the industrial revolution, most of the world's iron was made within 20 miles of the plant.

The earl already owned coal and iron mines, limestone quarries, sand-pits and blast furnaces, and his agent Richard Smith saw a large, modern ironworks as the perfect way to use these resources.

Replace

He bought 28 acres of land, a private railway, mines and minerals under the land from the Earl of Aberdeen, and the plant quickly built up a reputation, winning a medal at the 1862 International Exhibition for "fine collection of iron of good quality".

As steel began to replace iron in the 1880s, the plant was rebuilt on a much larger scale, and the five chimneys which towered above Brierley Hill became known as 'The Cunader', because of their resemblance to a giant cruise ship.

Michael, who lives in Kinver, says jobs at Round Oak

were much sought after in the steel trade when he joined as a 27-year-old in 1968. "At the time, I was working for Titan Steel Wheel at Cookley, near Kidderminster," he says. "In those days it was very hard to get a job at Round Oak. You usually had to know somebody who already worked there, but luckily enough, I just applied for a job and got accepted."

At its peak, 3,000 people were employed at the 50-acre site, but the 1970s saw a big fall in demand and 1,750 jobs were cut in the three years prior to closure.

Just two months before closure, personnel director Ian Copland had assured the remaining workers that their jobs were safe. Pledges were made to save the works and the Government agreed to look at a rescue package put forward by Dudley West Tory MP John Blackburn. But it was all to no avail.

Michael Lyon remembers a sombre mood in the plant on the last day. "At noon they told us we could go if we wanted, and most just ran out as soon as it was time," he says.

After leaving Round Oak, Michael set up taxi and window cleaning businesses.

Buildings like the main office block in Dudley Road survive to this day, but most of the works was demolished in 1984. The site is now home to the Waterfront offices, with Merry Hill shopping centre nearby.

Michael says: "I can still recognise where I worked, in the No. 3 bay, right opposite the Blue Brick pub," he says. Occasionally he goes back to the site to do a spot of shopping, but not very often.

But he adds: "They've had my job off me - they're not having my money, too."



Round Oak Steel Works, founded in 1857 by the Earl of Dudley



Michael Lyon in 1982 when Round Oak closed and, right, today

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NEWS

Football club bosses are defiant in face of arson



A portable building used by Mostyn Rangers Football Club was destroyed in a suspected arson attack

BOSSSES of a Kidderminster football club have vowed not to be beaten by arsonists who destroyed their changing rooms.

Two portable toilets and changing rooms belonging to Mostyn Rangers FC were burned down in the attack at the playing fields off Zortech Avenue.

Club secretary Steve Fox said the club had been left upset by the attack to the building which will cost at least £1,000 to replace, while the equipment it contained – which included goalposts, nets, corner flags and kits – was worth up to another £300.

But he said management would hold

an emergency meeting on January 29 to discuss replacing the facilities, which were used by both mens and children's teams.

He said: "We need to get it up and running as soon as possible. The facilities are not covered by insurance, so this will be a significant hit for the club in these hard times."

Upset

"We are very upset. The managers have put in a lot of hard work at the club and it's all voluntary.

"We have been here since 1974 using these facilities."

Mr Fox added that matches and training sessions would continue as normal at the grounds, which are

owned by Stourbridge College, once the harsh weather had subsided.

The fire was discovered shortly before 10.50am on January 16.

The blaze, which melted the toilets and seriously damaged the building.

Pc Dan Southan said: "We are investigating this as arson and want to hear about any sightings of people near those facilities on the field there from around 11am on January 16.

"The grounds can be seen from Burlish Top and any golfers on the adjoining course may also have noticed if anyone was there at the time."

Witnesses or anyone with information should call 101, quoting the incident reference 214-S-160113 or Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

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NEWS

Gallery campaigners in pledge to keep fighting

CAMPAIGNERS fighting the loss of services at Kidderminster Library gallery have pledged to battle on – despite them deciding to withdraw a Judicial Review.

The legal challenge to Worcestershire County Council's decision to take away space at the Library Gallery to make room for offices for staff, was to be based on claims of a lack of consultation and legal arguments.

But after taking further advice, the calls for the Judicial Review have been dropped.

Kidderminster Gallery Friends are concerned that not only will exhibition and music space be lost but that local history records are also under threat.

They are determined to fight the plans and refute the council's continued claims that there will be no loss of service.

Stephen Brown, secretary of the Friends, said: "The plans clearly mean the music performances will go, there is a loss of gallery space and the local history records are under threat, if some of them have not already been removed."

The Friends submitted a Freedom of Information request to the council for the release of paperwork relating to the original gallery design but say they were told finding this would involve too much time and money. A spokesman for Worcestershire County Council said: "The authority is confident information provided to the Planning and Regulatory Committee was accurate."

ATM man's car is stolen

A CAR was stolen while its owner used a cash machine near Halesowen.

Thieves struck outside the Spar, St Kenelm's Road, Romsley, police said.

The driver of the dark blue Audi A4 Quattro estate, left the keys in the driver's door side pocket and the vehicle unlocked while he used the cash machine.

He saw two men crossing the road and take his vehicle. Witnesses should call 101 quoting incident 356-s-160113.

Pupils' eastern adventure



Aiming for foreign climes, teacher Ron Jackson with, back, Katie Ludlam, Pippa Brazier and Sophie Bishop and, front, Laura Bennett

STUDENTS in Kidderminster are packing their bags for a month-long expedition to Cambodia and Thailand.

The students from Holy Trinity International School and King Charles I School will be leaving for their 'World Challenge Expedition' in July as part of their enrichment studies. In Cambodia they will visit

Angkor Wat, the world's largest Hindu temple complex, before undertaking a six-day trek in Chiang Mai, Northern Thailand and working in an orphanage.

To fund the trip, students from both schools held car boot sales, cake sales and a variety performance.

More fundraisers are planned.

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NEWS

Speed cut bid for blackspot

TRAFFIC-calming measures could be installed at a notorious accident blackspot near Kidderminster.

Hundreds of people signed a petition calling for the speed limit along the A449 at Cookley to be reduced from 60mph to 40mph after a 22-year-old shop worker died after losing control of her car on the same stretch of road last September while travelling from Wolverhampton to Kidderminster.

The petition, bearing 350 names, was handed over to Worcestershire County Council shortly before Christmas.

Councillor Chris Nicholls, of Wyre Forest District Council, has been campaigning to have the speed limit reduced since the death of Natasha Marie Kew, of High Street, Wordsley. He said he was "hoping speed restrictions or traffic-calming measures might be introduced along the stretch of road". Councillor Nicholls said he was surprised that speed enforcement had been toughened up at an often traffic-snarled spot on the A449 Wolverhampton Road at Broadwaters.

Newsagent couple are calling it a day



Surendra Patel and his wife Kala celebrate their retirement after 33 years with daughters Divya, left, and Dilusha and her husband Joydeep Ghoshdastidar

A COUPLE have sold their final newspaper after closing the the newsagent they have run for more than 30 years.

Surendra and Kala Patel started running Dilsur News, in Alexandra Road, Halesowen, in July 1980 but after years of early-morning starts, the couple, both aged 61, have decided it is time to retire.

They were joined by daughters Divya, 27, and Dilusha, 35, for their last day.

No-one is taking over the running of the shop but the family plan to continue living above it in the short term. Over the past 32 years, the couple have had only three week-long holidays due to the demands of the shop. Mr Patel said: "That is one week a decade."

"We have had a wonderful time and a wonderful life here at the shop."

"It has been excellent being a part of this community and we have a lot of great memories."

MP welcomes freeze on car parking fees

WYRE Forest MP Mark Garnier has welcomed plans to freeze parking charges to help the district's struggling businesses.

Council bosses want to scrap the five per cent increase in parking charges in Kidderminster, Bewdley and Stourport which was due to come into force in October.

Wyre Forest District Council agreed last year to put up the prices but the cabinet has decided it's not right time to impose further charges. A final decision on the proposals will be taken by the full council on February 27.

Mr Garnier welcomed the proposals, saying: "Wyre Forest District Council has to perform a tricky balancing act with car parking fees."

Council leader John Campion said: "We don't believe that now is the right time to increase parking charges further."

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NEWS

£1.6m development to help homeless under way

WORK has begun on a £1.6m housing development providing accommodation for young people at risk of being made homeless.

The centre in Bromsgrove Street, Kidderminster will help 16 to 25-year-olds access training and employment as well as provide somewhere safe and secure to live.

The Foyer scheme will be managed by St Basil's, a regional charity which works to prevent youth homelessness.

Once completed the development will have 19 accommodation units, office space for staff and training space for the residents.

Service manager Emma Poole said: "St Basil's has been in Kidderminster since 2009 providing support to local young people and we can see how important schemes like this are."

"It will mirror the scheme we have in Bromsgrove which has proved to be a great success."

Funding for the project has come from various sources including the WM Housing Group, the Homes and Communities Agency, Worcestershire County Council and Wyre Forest District Council. The development is in the "Eastern Gateway" of Kidderminster town centre which has been earmarked for regeneration by the district council.

Councillor Anne Hingley, said: "This new development will make a real contribution to reducing levels of youth unemployment and homelessness."

"The council is approached by many young people every year. Unfortunately, good quality, supported accommodation is very limited. This scheme will make a difference to the lives of the district's young people."

Charity shop needs help

A CHARITY shop in Kidderminster is looking for donations and volunteers.

Sense is asking people to bring their unwanted furniture, electrical goods and bric-a-brac to its Coventry Street store.

Mystery can be murder



Colin Young as Inspector Craddock and Sandy Tudor as Letitia Blacklock

SUPER sleuth Miss Marple will be finding out whodunnit in the latest show at Kidderminster's Rose Theatre.

Resident company The Nonentities will be performing Agatha Christie's A Murder is Announced runs until February 2.

The play is set in the village of Chipping Cleghorn.

Publicity manager Kerena Taylor said: "The Nonentities production of A Murder is Announced will be a treat for lovers of mysteries full as it is with weird characters, dramatic situations and enough red herrings to sink a trawler."

Performances will take place at 7.30pm.

The theatre says tickets are

selling well and advising people to book early. The next production by The Nonentities will be Ira Levin's Deathtrap from February 25 until March 2. Famed playwright Sidney Brühl debuts the latest in a series of Broadway flops and returns to his opulent Long Island home and his sympathetic but sick wife, Myra.

Kidderminster Operatic & Dramatic Society will then perform their version of High Society at the theatre from March 7-16.

The box office is open on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday between 9.30am and 3pm and on Saturday between 9.30am and 1.30pm.

For details call 01562 743745 or visit www.rosetheatre.co.uk

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What's New for 2013

Learning 4 Life

Dawn to Dusk - Nought to Ninety

The Wordsley School
Brierley Hill Road, Wordsley Stourbridge, West Midlands. DY8 5SP

ADULT EDUCATION, TRAINING AND LEISURE

FRENCH

New course starts April 13. Contact Student Services for more information.

CREATIVE WRITING

Mon 25th Feb. 19.00-21.00. 4 wks. £25.80 #

INTRO TO SIGN LANGUAGE

Mon 25th Feb. 19.00-21.00, 10 wks. £51.60 #

AN INTRODUCTION TO FAMILY HISTORY

Mon 25th Feb. 13.30-15.30. 5 wks. £42.40 # Cons. £33.30 and £11

CONTINUING FAMILY HISTORY

Tues 26th Feb. 9.30-11.30. 5 wks. £36.40 #

CREATE YOUR OWN WEBSITE

New course starts April 13. Contact Student Services for more information.

ADVANCED WEBSITE EDITING

Short'N'Sweet

Must have completed 'Create your own website course'
Wed 13th Mar. 14.30-16.30 OR Thurs 14th Mar. 19.00-21.00.
Both 3 wks. £21.90 #

AN INTRODUCTION TO DIGITAL IMAGING

USING PHOTOSHOP ELEMENTS

Tues 19th Feb. 13.30-15.30. 6 wks. £43.70 #

CONTINUING DIGITAL IMAGING USING

PHOTOSHOP ELEMENTS

Mon 18th Feb. 9.30-11.30. 6 wks. £43.70 #

WATERCOLOUR PAINTING FOR BEGINNERS

New course starts April 13. Contact Student Services for more information

Short'N'Sweet

DRAWING FOR BEGINNERS

Short'N'Sweet

Mon 11th Mar. 14.30-16.30, 3 wks. £21.90 #

PAINTING AND DRAWING

suitable for all levels

Classes are held on Tuesdays 19.00 - 21.00;
Wednesdays 9.30- 11.30; Thursdays 9.30- 12.00 and Thursdays
13.30- 15.30. New courses start April 13. Contact Student
Services for more information.

CANAL ART: ROSES AND CASTLES

Tues. 5th Feb. 12.00-14.00 OR Mon 25th Feb. 19.00-21.00
Both 5 wks. £25.80 #

BLACK COUNTRY CRAFTS

Short'N'Sweet

Mon. 11th Mar. 9.30-11.30. 3 wks. £21.90 #

JEWELLERY MAKING

Short'N'Sweet

Thurs 14th Mar. 19.00-21.00. 3 wks. £21.90 #

AN INTRODUCTION TO NAIL ART

Short'N'Sweet

Wed 6th Mar 12.30-14.00. 4 wks. £21.90 #

PATCHWORK AND EMBROIDERY

suitable for all levels

Tues 26th Feb. 19.00-21.00. 5 wks £26.70 #

PATCHWORK

Wednesdays 14.30-16.30.

New course starts April 13. Contact Student Services

for more information.

UPHOLSTERY AND SOFT FURNISHING

suitable for all levels. Mon 25th Feb. 19.00-21.00. 5 wks £25.80 #

NEEDLE FELT

Tues 5th Feb. 9.30-11.30 or Thurs 7th Feb. 19.00-21.00, 6 wks. £31.00.

PLAY THE GUITAR

Beginners Thursdays 20.00-21.00

Continuing Beginners Thursday 19.00-20.00

Improvers: Tuesdays 19.00-21.00,

Intermediates: Mondays 19.00-21.00

New courses start April 13. Contact Student Services for more information.

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Lunch club available. Good Ofsted report.
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REFLEXOLOGY

Tues 12th Mar. 19.00-21.00. 3 wks. £21.90 #

Short'N'Sweet

INDIAN HEAD MASSAGE

Tues 12th Feb. 19.00-21.00. 3 wks. £21.90 #

Short'N'Sweet

MEDITATION

Thurs 7th Mar 19.00-20.30. Both 4 wks. £21.90 #

Short'N'Sweet

FITNESS YOGA @ Oakfield

Short'N'Sweet

New course starts April 13. Contact Student Services for more information.

FITNESS GLIDING @ Oakfield

Short'N'Sweet

Fri 15th Feb 11.15-12.15. 6 wks. £25.90 #

PILATES

Beginners classes on Thursdays 18.00-19.00 and @ Oakfield
Centre on Friday 10.00-11.00.

Improvers: Tuesdays 19.00-20.00; Wednesday 18.30-19.30;
Thursdays 19.05-20.05 and 20.10-21.10

New courses start April 13. Contact Student Services for more information.

LEGS, BUMS & TUMS

Tuesdays 20.05-21.05 New course starts April 13. Contact
Student Services for more information.

BALLROOM and LATIN AMERICAN DANCING

Mondays Beginners 18.30-19.30 and Improvers/Intermediates
19.30-20.45 New classes start in April 2013. Contact Student
Services for more information.

ADULT SWIMMING LESSONS

New classes start in April 2013. Contact Student Services for
more information. Courses take place on Mondays.

Beginners: 19.00-19.45. Improvers: 19.45-20.30.
Intermediates: 20.30-21.15

PRIVATE SWIMMING LESSONS

In a group of 2 or 1 to 1. Contact the office for further details

RLSS NATIONAL POOL LIFEGUARD

18th Feb 2013, 8th Apr 2013, 29th July OR 5th August 2013.
All 8.30-17.00. 6 days. £173.75 plus additional fees £78.75

RLSS NATIONAL RESCUE TEST for SWIMMING

TEACHERS/COACHES

1 day retake; Mon 22nd July 2013 subject to previous qualification
and training £36.90, add. fees £26.95.

Full course: Tues 23rd July and Wed 24th July 2013, 8.30-16.00,
£57.80, add. fees £26.95.

DUDLEY MBC INDUCTION

TRAINING FOR POOLSIDE ASSISTANTS

Mon 17th June 2013 9.00-12.00 £18.40

EMERGENCY FIRST AID

Fri. 8th Feb. OR Sat. 23rd Mar. Both 09.00-16.00. 1 day. £36.90

PAEDIATRIC EMERGENCY FIRST AID

Sat 9th Feb. OR Fri. 22nd Mar. Both 09.00-13.00. 1/2 day £24.55

START YOUR OWN BUSINESS

New courses start in April 13. Contact Student Services for more information.

INTRO. TO TRADING ON THE STOCK MARKET

New courses start in April 13. Contact Student Services for more information.

BUYING AND SELLING ON E-BAY

Monday 4th Mar. 19.00 - 21.00. 4 wks. £29.15. #

COMPUTING for the TERRIFIED

Learn to use a computer from scratch! 4 wk courses start
Wed. 6th Mar. 9.30-11.30. £29.15 #.

FLORISTRY

3 wk course starts Tuesday 12th Feb 14.30-16.30.
£27.90 Cons. £22.45 and £11.00 #.

FLORAL CRAFTS

3 wk course starts Tuesday 12th Feb 14.30-16.30.
£27.90 Cons. £22.45 and £11.00 #.

LEARN TO SCULPT IN STONE

6 wk course starts Thursday 7th Feb. 19.00 - 21.00 £48.50 #.

FACE PAINTING AND GLITTER TATTOOS

New course starts April 13. Contact Student Services for more information.

Phone us to add your name to our 'I'm interested list' for:

BEGINNERS GUIDE: APPLE MAC COMPUTERS

Mon 13th May 19.00-20.30. 6 wks. £43.70 #

SOCIAL MEDIA: FACEBOOK, TWITTER, SKYPE, YOU TUBE. WHATS THE FUSS?

Tues. 7th May 19.00-20.30. 6 wks. £43.70 #

COMMUNITY SESSIONS

ADULT SWIMMING: Mon. 11.50-12.35, Tues. 19.00-20.00,
Thurs. 19.00-20.15. All £2.60

AQUAFIT: Wed. 12.15-13.00, Fri. 11.50-12.35. £2.60.
Wed. 19.00-20.00, Sun. 9.00-10.00. £3.70

FITNESS SWIM Mon. 18.00-18.45. £1.60 for 10-19 yrs olds

More information? 07963 986672, OR 141communitygroup@hotmail.co.uk

ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

PLAY THE GUITAR

A brilliant opportunity for kids (over 8 years old) to learn tunes on electric or acoustic guitar and have fun! Provide your own guitar.

Beginners: Mon 25th Feb 5 wks.
16.45-17.45 OR 17.45-18.45. £43.75

Intermediates: New course starts
April 2013.



LEARNING 4 LIFE SWIM SCHOOL

Term Dates: Monday 15th April 2013 to Sunday 21st July 2013
excluding Mon 6th May 2013 and Saturday 25th May to Sunday
2nd June 2013. Tues to Fri 12 wks. Sat, Sun, Mon 13wks

	12 WKS	13 WKS
COST: First Steps, Pre Beg, Beg, Improve.	£49.20	£53.30
Intermediates 1, 2 and 3	£42.60	£46.15
Rookie, W. Skills, L'saving, S & Swim	£53.40	£57.85

We operate 7 days a week and offer sessions at the following standards:

First Steps: An ideal first class for your child. It enables young children from 3 years to enjoy water, develop confidence and preliminary skills with the help of buoyancy aids when needed. Five different 'Stanley' incentive badges award progress towards successful transition into pre-beginners stage and beyond.

Pre-Beginner: Min age 4 1/2 years. Provides familiarisation activities and skills to develop floatation and propulsion without aids up to 5m.

Beginner: Min age 4 1/2 years. Provides skill development to swim 5m on a front stroke and 5m back crawl.

Improver: Improves aquatic skills and stamina to swim 15m on a front stroke and 15m back crawl.

Intermediate 1: Develops confidence in deep water and front crawl breathing action to swim 20 meters on a front stroke and 20m back crawl.

Intermediate 2: Helps to build stamina and endurance to swim 50m on a front stroke and 25m on back crawl.

Intermediate 3: Develops competence on all four strokes (25m) and a front and back stroke for 100m.

Water Skills: To develop survival and rescue skills.

Rookie Lifeguard: Learn new skills, have fun and overcome challenges. Min. age 9 years. Must be able to swim 20 m on a front stroke and 20 m on a back stroke.

Survive & Swim: Min age 11.5 years. Must be able to swim 20m on a front stroke and 20 m on a back stroke. Develops water safety knowledge, first aid, self rescue, survival skills, lifesaving techniques. Can test speed and stamina in a competitive situation. Reg. fee £23.95.

THE SMALL PRINT

April courses May be subject to availability. When you call we will either register your interest. OR if places are available confirm your booking and take payment.

What is Short'N'Sweet?

An introductory taster course of 6 hrs in a small group

Holiday Dates: Learning4Life is closed Monday 18th February opening from 16th -24th Feb.

This programme is subject to change: particularly if we are unable to recruit minimum class numbers



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Dudley
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NEWS

NEWS

in brief

Support service needs volunteers

A HOME visiting service supporting people with sight loss around Dudley is looking for volunteers.

The Visually Impaired People project is run by the Thomas Pocklington Resource and Information Centre, Hagley Road.

It is a free service which offers blind and partially-sighted people support.

Volunteers would be asked to make visits either weekly or fortnightly for about one-and-a-half hours.

There is a volunteer induction course in March at the Mary Stevens Centre, in Oldswinford.

Call Vivien Smith on 01384 440333 or 01384 889887 or people can email vivien.smith@pocklington-trust.org.uk for full details.

Centre to stage climbing courses

NEW rock climbing courses are starting at a Dudley leisure centre.

Indoor rock climbing lessons for adults and juniors are taking place at the Crystal Leisure Centre Bell Street. The course runs on Mondays at 6pm and cost £55 for nine weeks. Call 01384 812800 or visit dudley.gov.uk/sport for details.

Extra barriers

MORE flood defences were being put up in Bewdley as water levels rose. Barriers had already been put up along Severn-side North. Environment Agency workers are now installing defences at Beales Corner.

People get to have a say on fears over waste plant

DOZENS of people have had their say on controversial plans for a waste recycling plant to be built near homes in Brierley Hill. Many said they were open to persuasion on the revised plans drawn up by energy firm Clean Power Properties, on disused land in Moor Street.

But fears over increased traffic, with potentially three lorries an hour accessing the site, are among the main reasons for opposition. A second public consultation event was held recently for neighbours to air views.



Clean Power Properties representative Gavin Miller is pictured talking with resident and civic society chairman Tim Sunter and Councillor Judy Foster

Church Street resident Justine Chamberlain-Page brought her three sons to the event as she discussed the scheme with firm representatives.

"I like the idea of the plant but it is just where it is going to be that is the problem," the 41-year-old said. "It is going to devalue our homes."

Fellow resident Tim Sunter said he was open-minded about the scheme but added: "My biggest concern is about the transport with lorries driving past the houses."

Narrowed

"The bridge nearby has already been narrowed so I'd have to question that." Bosses say the plant, which would employ up to 30 staff, would turn waste into gas to generate electricity to power up to 10,000 homes.

They added the six-acre plant would release low carbon dioxide emissions and no smelly odour.

Project manager Steve Crutchley said the firm had heeded people's concerns following the initial consultation.

"We have held this consultation because we wanted to show that we have listened to people's comments and wanted to explain the changes," he said.



An artist's impression of the waste recycling plant

Get your teeth into pantomime



Halesowen theatre company Open Door who will be performing the pantomime, Dracula - The Vampire Strikes Back!

DRACULA is staking a claim to raise a ghoulish giggle with children of all ages at a pantomime in Halesowen next week.

The Open Door Theatre Company in Halesowen is putting on Dracula - The Vampire Strikes Back next week.

Sapphi is a vampire slayer who, with the help of her mother Coco and her father Van Helsing, aim to defeat count Dracula and find his treasure.

They are hindered by the inept detective Sheerluck Holmes (and his assistant PC

World), the bizarre Dr Renfield and his love-lorn girlfriend Lucy, drippy Jonathan Harker and lots of barmy bats.

The pantomime will be performed at Earls High School, Halesowen, on Friday and Saturday at 7.30 pm. Tickets cost £4 and £5.

Director Steve Hyett said: "A good time is guaranteed ... whatever your blood group!"

For details contact the company via Facebook or Steve at beakerman@btinternet.com

Group has helped to raise cash for pets

A NEWLY formed fundraising group in Halesowen has helped with the collection of thousands of pounds for the RSPCA Birmingham Animal Centre & Hospital.

Members have been staging events at some of the regions Pets at Home stores including Oldbury and Quinton that have contributed towards a regional total of £3,756.

Helen Tuite, Community Fundraiser for the animal centre said "This money will be put to very good use here looking after all the abandoned and ill-treated animals that come through our doors."

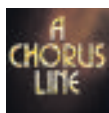
The group still wants members from Halesowen to get involved.

Anyone interested in finding out more information can contact Helen Tuite on 07715 540518 or 0300 123 8567 or via email ohamfundraising@rspca.org.uk.

Singer's success

A SINGER from Sedgley who was discovered behind a perfume counter at the Merry Hill Centre is tasting success after releasing her first single. Beth Sherburn, 21, signed with Purple Circle Records and now she is 19 in the Commercial Pop Club Chart with her cover of Ordinary World.

star★extraTRAVEL London Theatre Breaks



Choose your show, price band* and how you want to travel

Coach inclusive breaks – Two days

Selected weekend departures

Saturday Night from £129.⁹⁵

Dine and Dance from £139.⁹⁵

Take in a top West End show and have some free time in London for shopping and sightseeing. For the Dine and Dance option see the matinee performance before heading back to the hotel for dinner and disco (conditions apply). For the Saturday Night option you will see the evening performance. For both breaks the price includes a theatre ticket, overnight stay in a four-star outer London hotel, with full English breakfast (plus dinner for Dine and Dance options). Pick ups offered are Dudley, Shrewsbury, Telford, Walsall and Wolverhampton.

Rail inclusive breaks – Two or three days

Departures most weekends

Saturday Night Theatre from £139.⁹⁵

Catch the Theatre Express and enjoy a super two-day weekend break in the capital. There's a choice of London hotels and your ticket is for a Saturday evening performance. Rail travel is standard class with the option to upgrade. Departs Saturday morning/early afternoon from Birmingham New Street, Shrewsbury, Stafford or Wolverhampton, returning on the Sunday afternoon/early evening to give plenty of free time for shopping and sightseeing.

Theatre Showstopper from £189.⁹⁵

Theatre Weekend from £189.⁹⁵

These popular theatre packages to the West End depart from Birmingham New Street, Shrewsbury, Stafford or Wolverhampton on the Friday morning returning on the Sunday afternoon/early evening. Standard class travel is included with the option to upgrade. Two nights stay at a three or four-star London hotel of your choice (hotel supplements may apply) and a top priced ticket for a Friday evening performance for the Theatre Showstopper package or choose your price band for the Saturday evening performance with the Theatre Weekend package.

*The "from" price and price bands vary for each show – see brochure for details. Single room supplements apply.

Arranged by Omega Holidays (ABTA V4782)

For a theatre brochure please call (01902) 319999 (Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm), or go to expressandstar.com/starextratrans

Please read brochure/web page for full information plus terms and conditions

Fears over pay day loans

A DUDLEY MP has spoken out against the increase in pay day loan companies offering quick cash to customers, which are becoming an increasingly common sight on high streets in the Black Country and Staffordshire.

Ian Austin, who represents the north of the borough, says he is concerned about the growing number of firms offering small-term loans saying it could lure borrowers into ballooning debts.

He said the number seeking pay day loans nationwide had increased by 300 per cent in the past two years.

The MP said in Dudley High Street, the number of shops offering quick cash has risen to six in recent months.

They include The Money Shop, Speedy Cash and the Cheque Centre. In Wolverhampton there are four within the ring road while Sandwell has five and Walsall two. There are two in Cannock, two in Kidderminster and three in Stafford's main precinct.

Interest

Pay day loans are described as small short-term loans which often have very high rates of interest. People often turn to them to tide them over until their next pay day.

Mr Austin believes the Government should cap the cost of credit and

he would promote the work of those offering more affordable loans, like credit unions. He added: "I am going to talk to the council to see what more can be done to promote the work of lenders like credit union Castle and Crystal in Dudley."

Mr Austin said that, unlike pay day loan companies, the credit union offered affordable loans with modest rates of interest.

Spokesman for the pay day loan company Cheque Centre, which has branches in the region including Dudley, Jason Wassell, said: "Our average loan is about £200 until pay day, and most customers have no trouble paying when their loan is due. We are always happy to discuss our business with community leaders."

Family's relief after home takes blame

THE son of a dementia sufferer who died from hypothermia after going missing from a residential home has spoken of his relief that the family are finally getting answers after home bosses admitted blame.

Hilda Fairweather, aged 91, went to Abele View care home near Stourbridge to provide her a more secure accommodation because she would walk off in the night.

But within two weeks of moving to the home in Iwerley, Mrs Fairweather, from Kidderminster, froze to death overnight in the outdoor grounds of the home.

Following a two-and-a-half year police investigation, Stafford District Council charged the home with failing to ensure the safety of its residents and not making a sufficient risk assessment. At a magistrates

court hearing, the company pleaded guilty to both charges. Mrs Fairweather's son Roger, 51, of Bishops Castle, Shropshire, said: "We are obviously relieved, but hardly surprised because, frankly, they had no leg to stand on. It is clear that staff and management were grossly negligent."

He added: "This has gone on for so long for the family, we want it to finish and a result to happen so we can move on with our lives."

Mrs Fairweather lived with her husband George, 90, in sheltered accommodation in Kidderminster until her dementia worsened.

Abele View care home will be sentenced by a judge at a hearing at Stafford Crown Court in April.

Health site is approved

A MULTI-MILLION pound health centre in Lye has been given the go-ahead by Dudley Borough Council's Development Control committee.

The £6 million health centre would create 36 full-time jobs as it accommodates the relocation of two local GP practices. Committee chairman Rachel Harris said: "A lot of thought and planning has gone into this and I welcome the application."

The development, which would be built on land between Jackson Street and Clinic Drive, would also house a pharmacy.

Nursery marking birthday



Owner Debbie Mason with youngsters Chloe Gosling aged three, Ben Cochrane and staff at Playbox Nursery as they get ready for their 15th birthday

YOUNG tots baked cakes and sang Happy Birthday to celebrate the 15th anniversary of a nursery in Kingswinford.

Play Box Nursery marked the occasion with a week of activities, including trampolining, painting and an outing to Himley Park.

It ended with a party at the nursery, on 3rd Avenue, The Pensnett Estate, where the youngsters baked a muffin cake and sang songs. Nursery owner Debbie Mason said: "It was such good fun. The kids all made their own party hats and sang Happy Birthday to the nursery. When we first opened it

was just going to be a small family business, but now some of the children who first started coming here are at secondary school. It feels very special.

In September the business opened a pre-school in Wall Heath Community Centre, in Envile Road, which takes up to 26 children aged between three and four years old.

Ms Mason said she was now looking for new premises in which to open another nursery by the end of the year. She said: "We have looked into a few different places but none have worked out so far."

Britannia name to go from high street

THE Britannia building society name is set to disappear from the West Midlands.

It means branches in Dudley will be rebranded as the Co-operative Bank. And 37 branches across the country, including Wolverhampton, will close. The move follows the society's merger with the Co-operative Bank back in 2009.

More than three dozen branches of the Britannia building society will close as the historic Staffordshire firm fades out after more than 150 years.

Remaining former Britannia branches will be rebranded as Co-op banks. The move will affect branches in Halesowen, Blackheath, Kidderminster and West Bromwich.

The Co-op Bank says 34 jobs will be lost - mostly managerial - but most of the 188 staff at the 37 doomed offices will be moved to neighbouring branches.

It is still unclear how the move will affect Stoke City, which has been sponsored by Britannia since the naming of the new football stadium in 1997.

The current sponsorship deal runs until the end of the football season in 2014. Founded in 1856 as the Leek and Moorlands, it adopted the Britannia name following its merger with the Oldbury Britannia in 1975.

Branches are being shut where there is another close by as part of an overhaul following its merger with Britannia building society in 2009.

3,000 have their say on council tax

AROUND 3,000 residents responded to a council tax consultation in Dudley - despite a row breaking out between the borough's leading parties about the survey.

Councillors are asking whether residents are prepared to accept an increase in council tax to try to offset multi-million pound cuts.

Residents can have their say on options including accepting an average council tax rise ranging from 43p to £1 a week.

Opposition councillors have called the consultation a "complete sham" after claiming major decisions on next year's budget will be made at a cabinet meeting on February 12.



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NEWS

Hundreds check out the plans for supermarket

HUNDREDS of people poured into an event to unveil plans for a new budget supermarket.

A few had reservations about the extra traffic that the proposed Lidl store would create in Kingswinford.

But the vast majority signed a petition in favour.

Lidl is applying to Dudley Council for planning permission for the store on the Duckworth Trading Estate in Stallings Lane, which would create around 40 jobs.

Within two hours of an open day more than 200 people had attended.

The event was held at Dudley Kingswinford Rugby Club in Swindon Road, Wall Heath.

"It's been so busy and the free samples of food and drink have been so popular that already we've had to send to our Amblecote store for more fresh bakery products because they were running out," said Lidl acquisitions manager Donna Comstock.

By 1pm - two hours after the start - around 55 people had signed a petition giving people the option to be for or against the plans, with only four objecting.

Variety

Those against said it was too near their homes, there were too many supermarkets in the area and it would increase traffic problems.

But others registered to be notified when Lidl jobs became available.

Kathryn Clarke and June Thompson, both of Sandyfields Road, Sedgley, said they used the Morrisons in Kingswinford at the moment but would welcome the variety of also having a Lidl in the area.

Brian Colwell, of Dubarry Avenue, Kingswinford, said: "I was concerned about the traffic the Lidl would create but, after seeing the plans, I am pleased they will be widening the access road, so it should be OK."

John Hale, aged 74, of New Dudley Road, Wall Heath, said: "We've used the Lidl at Amblecote and it's good

value - and if they have a shop in Kingswinford it will bring more competition for Morrisons."

Richard Lee, aged 67, of Swindon Road, Wall Heath, said his only worry was traffic.



An artist's impression of the proposed new Lidl store at Kingswinford



June Thompson and Kathryn Clarke



Sheila Colwell and Brian Colwell

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Former top flight football referee Harry dies, aged 81

£30,000 grant will boost sport for the disabled

DISABLED people will have the chance to enjoy more sport thanks to a £30,000 Sport England grant.

It will be used in Wyre Forest to increase the number of disabled people over the age of 14 regularly participating in sport. For three years the district council

sports development team will offer fishing, Boccia – a ball sport – and Short Mat Bowls.

Fishing equipment costs will be covered and people taught by an experienced coach.

Activities charges will be at a reduced rate.

Councillor Ian Hardiman, cabinet member for community well-being, said the London Paralympic Games 2012 gave a summer of sport that we will never forget.

The legacy from them would filter down into the Wyre Forest district as a result of the additional funding secured by the council, he added.

Challenge aids charity

A CONSULTANT anaesthetist raised £2,133 by cycling and rowing the distance equal to Worcester-shire to Paris.

Dr Chris Mowatt tackled more than 400km on cycling and rowing machines.

He embarked on his challenge inspired by friend and colleague, Tanya Rees, who died of cancer in October.

Dr Mowatt carried out the challenge in 16 hours in the League of Friends Coffee shop at the Alexandra Hospital, Redditch.

Family firm marks milestone



Celebrating are, seated, director Paul Smith, of Stourbridge, with, from left, Melanie Gillespie, Ian Payne, Jerome Gillespie, and Nathan Smith

IT is a family affair for staff at a Stourbridge joinery firm celebrating its 25th year in business.

Firm director Paul Smith, aged 56, marked the milestone at Prospect Joinery Ltd in Old Wharf Road surrounded by his family. Daughter Melanie Gillespie, 26, joined the company seven years ago and works in the firm's administration office. Meanwhile her husband of two years

Budget cuts to push up the cost of dying

MOURNERS will soon have to pay more to bury their loved ones in Wyre Forest under plans to increase fees by up to five per cent as part of council budget cuts.

Council leaders are proposing higher fees for Kidderminster Cemetery from April as part of their 2013/14 budget. They need to reduce spending by around £500,000 to help meet a shortfall in Government funding.

As part of the proposals, the council wants to increase charges for some services, including burial fees. If approved, the cost of burial rights for Wyre Forest residents would go up from £441 to £463 while cremation rights would rise from £231 to £243.

Interment fees for a full grave at Kidderminster Cemetery for a person over 16 would be increased from £389 to £408. Increases are also proposed for the cost of putting up a memorial which will rise from £163 to £171 and maintenance fees will go up by £4 from £84 to £88.

Council leader John Campion said: "The costs involved with making sure the cemetery is clean and secure keep rising which is why we need to put up these charges."

Residents can have their say on the proposals as part of the budget consultation, which runs until February 3.

Meanwhile other charges are set to go up including rental fees for rooms at Kidderminster Town Hall and galleries at Bewdley Museum.

Fresh bid is sent in over homes plan

DEVELOPERS have lodged a fresh bid to build a housing development on the site of a former maternity hospital.

Plans for 41 homes on the Lucy Baldwin Hospital site off Olive Grove, Stourport, were turned down in November.

Councillors have been concerned about increased traffic and the size of the flats. But developer Taylor Wimpey has submitted new proposals for the scheme. If approved there would be a total of 41 new homes.

The main hospital block would be demolished to make way for 38 properties.

The developer said it had discussed the development with Wyre Forest District Council.

FORMER top flight football referee Harry Powell – who kept the likes of George Best and Bobby Moore in check – has died at 81.

Harry, who officiated in the Kidderminster and District Football League for nearly 60 years, only quit the game after suffering a stroke when he was 78.

Ernie Pyke, secretary and chairman of Kidderminster and District Football League, said: "The clubs loved him. He always used to start his pre-match spiel by patting his FA badge and saying 'you don't get this from Tesco's'. He stayed with our league right to the end, which is unusual because a lot of those who got to the top don't stick with their roots."

Mr Pyke also recalled that Harry, formerly of Farfield, Kidderminster, and Lickhill, Stourport, more recently of Bridgnorth, used to turn up at matches in his "Bubble car". Great-grandfather Harry, who died in hospital after a long illness, originally played as outside right for Kidderminster Harriers and turned to refereeing after a knee injury.

He officiated at interna-



Former ref Harry Powell

He was once quoted as saying: "You can keep your Ronaldo – George Best was the greatest player I've ever seen." Harry, is survived by his widow, Ann, and daughter, Diane Jones.

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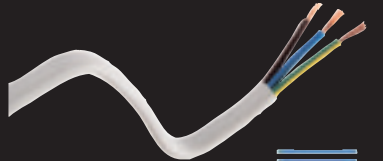
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NEWS

Beauty spot left littered with debris of snow fun

A POPULAR beauty spot in the Black Country has been left littered with the debris of abandoned sledges following the melting of snow and ice.

Estate agents signs, broken pieces of plastic and bags make up some of the rubbish. It has been left at the bottom of slopes at Sedgley Beacon. The situation has caused concern with the Friends of Sedgley Beacon group.

Treasurer Tony Cowell said: "We always have a problem with people leaving rubbish, and it appears to have come to a head again."

"We need people who use the site to take away their rubbish with them, or we are left in a position where the site can look a mess," he added.

Walker Claire Gallagher, aged 52, of Sedgley, said: "I walk my dog up here regularly. I thought it was fantastic to see the kids up here having fun, because there is not much for kids to do around here."

"But it is now a mess with all the sledges, and with some of them broken."

"The broken parts could be hazardous for people like me and my dog."

"It's a shame the sledges can't be made stronger. There seems to be a lot which are broken."

by Alex Ross

People should take them home or at least leave them by a bin."

Officials from Dudley Council said they would look at co-ordinating a clean up of the area.

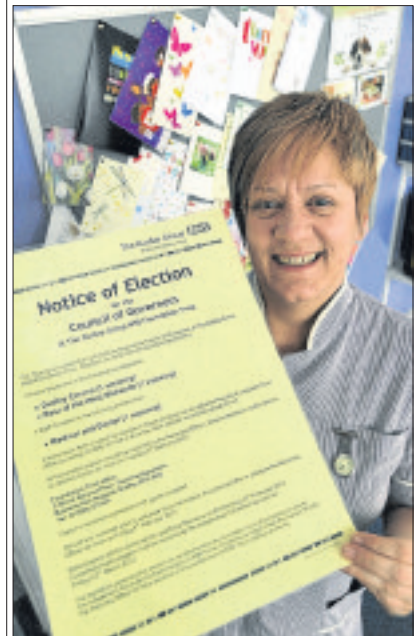
Councillor Judy Foster, said: "There are a number of landowners across Sedgley Beacon but now that we have been informed, we will be establishing which areas can be cleared by the authority."

"We will also liaise with other landowners and co-ordinate a tidy-up."

The beacon is popular with walkers as it provides panoramic views across the Black Country and Staffordshire.

It features a Grade II listed tower built in 1846. In October, the friends group launched a fresh bid to restore the tower and open it to visitors.

Governors wanted



Staff-elected governor, Julie Walklate works at Russells Hall Hospital, Dudley

DUDLEY'S hospital trust wants new governors to represent patients.

There are vacancies in the public constituencies of Central Dudley and the Rest of the West Midlands, which takes in the outskirts of the borough, Sandwell and Birmingham areas. Those elected will sit on the Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust's council of governors, which oversees health care and aims to make improvements.

Nominees can be Foundation Trust members or from the wider community. The deadline for nominations is Tuesday, February 5. Dudley Group chairman John Edwards said governors play an important part.

To request a nomination form, call Helen Board on 01384 321124, email foundationmembers@dgh.nhs.uk or go to www.dudleygroup.nhs.uk

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BOOK REVIEWS

Tube celebrates 150 years of keeping London on the move

THE LONDON Underground, the world's first underground railway, celebrated 150 years of keeping the capital on the move in January.

The city at the heart of the world's greatest empire was grinding to a halt in the 1850s. London had seen its population more than double in half a century to two-and-half-million. The streets were choked by horse-drawn traffic and pedestrians.

Fanciful projects were suggested to solve this problem, some now sounding like they've come straight out of a steampunk fantasy – such as great elevated glass corridors for overhead trains.

Engineering

It was decided to burrow under the streets, taking the new-fangled steam locomotive into the bowels of the earth with navvies using the 'cut and cover' method to create railway tunnels.

The three-and-half-mile Metropolitan Railway, linking Paddington, Euston and King's Cross stations with the city's financial and business heart, opened on January 9, 1863. A grand celebration dinner was held underground but notable by its absence was Prime Minister Lord Palmerston, who replied that at the age of 79 he would prefer to stay above ground for a few more years. This set in motion one of the great transport endeavours of the Victorian and Edwardian ages, eras



The famous Underground roundel



Written by experts on the system



Underground art © TfL from the London Transport Museum collection

resplendent with awe-inspiring engineering projects.

Written by three experts from the London Transport Museum, located in Covent Garden, **Underground: How the Tube Shaped London** (Allen Lane, hardback, £25) is a large handsome book. It is very informative and beautifully illustrated with diagrams, photographs and the distinctive style of Underground art. It tells the story of the network as it grew, with steam locos giving way to electric tube trains, boring

ever deeper under the city.

Writers David Bownes, Oliver Green and Sam Mullins share chapters. Topics range from the Victorian entrepreneurs to the war years, when the deep lines became unofficial air raid shelters, to the political wrangles of the post-war period, finishing with the 21st century modern system that provides four million passenger journeys a day.

For a more poetic exploration of the world beneath the streets of the capital, Peter Ackroyd's **London Under** (Vintage, paper-

back, £7.99) descends into the tube and the catacombs, bunkers, vaults, pipes and sewers carved out of the clay.

It's a slim volume but packed with anecdotes and fascinating trivia, such as forgotten Westbourne river still flowing through an iron pipe at Sloane Street tube station.

Ackroyd never misses an opportunity to link this hidden realm with the underworlds of mythology. He also includes an excellent bibliography for further reading.

Leon Burakowski

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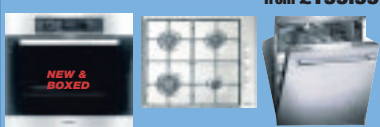
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NEWS

NEWS
in brief**Firewalk is aiming to help raise £2m**

ANIMAL lovers are urged to "hot foot it" to a firewalk to raise funding for a £2 million pet hospital.

The PDSA Firewalk Challenge, at 6pm on March 9 at the De Vere Village Hotel, Dudley, is to help the Pet Hospital Appeal, to replace its cramped site in Quinton.

Full training and a motivational talk will be provided on the night before the walk takes place.

There is a £10 registration fee and all participants, who must be at least 16, are asked to raise at least £100 in sponsorship for the cause.

To book visit www.pdsa.org.uk/fund raising or call freephone 0800 508 8323.

Jewellery stolen in home burglary

THOUSANDS of pounds of jewellery including bespoke rings were stolen at a house in Stourport.

Thieves broke in, causing £200 damage, at the Ribbesford Drive home.

They made off with rings including a single square diamond band, worth £2,000, and a white gold wedding band, worth £500. Also stolen was a Pandora necklace and earrings set.

£1.5m tunnel work

A £1.5 million project to restore a Dudley canal tunnel started after it was found to be unsafe. The 1.7 mile long Netherton Tunnel, serving the Birmingham Canal Navigations network, will close the canal for four months.

Signed set of Wolves FA Cup team up for auction

A COLLECTION of memorabilia including signed postcards of the Wolves 1939 FA Cup Final team and autographs of Sir Don Bradman and Fred Perry will go under the hammer.

The items will be auctioned off at Cuttlestones in Wolverhampton as part of a special collectors sale. The 14 cards are signed by each player ahead of the final, which Wolves lost 4-1 to Portsmouth.

The set was originally awarded to a winner of the 'lucky programme' draw at Molineux in 1939, who had the choice of taking home either a ball from a league game or the cards. It includes legendary players Alex McIntosh and Dicky Dorset, as well as one of Wolves' most successful players – and later manager – Stan Cullis.

Sales manager Tom Waldron said: "Whilst the team was ultimately defeated by Portsmouth in the final, the cards will still be of particular interest to collectors as not only are there just a few known to be in circulation, but the 1939 final was the last to be played before a six-year hiatus following the outbreak of the Second World War."

Victorious

An autograph album being auctioned off by a separate collector also includes 1935 Wimbledon Champion Fred Perry, the 1935-36 New Zealand 'All Blacks' tourist team, and cricketing legends Wally Hammond and Bradman.

Bradman's signature is among those of the victorious Australia Ashes tourist team of 1934, which also includes captain Bill Woodfull and the prolific batsman Bill Ponsford.

In the decisive fifth and final Test of the 1934 Ashes series, Bradman and Ponsford scored an astronomical 510 runs (a partnership of 451) of Australia's total of 701, securing victory for the tourists.

Hammond's signature features alongside



Wolverhampton Wanderers 1939 FA Cup Final team front row, from left: J. Mullen, S. Burton, A. McIntosh, S. Cullis, D. Westcott, R. Dorsett, J. Maguire; back, from left: W. Morris, T. Galley, A. Scott, F. Taylor, J. Gardiner



A signed postcard of Wolves captain Stan Cullis



Signature – the postcard of Joe Gardiner



Autograph – Wolves player Bill Morris

those of the 1935 England XI who took on South Africa at Old Trafford in the fourth of a five-test home series.

While both teams played to a draw in Manchester, the tourists went on to win the

series one-nil, thanks to an earlier victory at Lord's.

The Wolves cards have a guide price of £200 to £400, while the autograph album is expected to fetch at least £100. The auction



Set – salesroom manager Tom Waldron with the photographs

will start at 10am on February 15 at the Clarence Street auction rooms with online bids via www.the-saleroom.com. Viewing is between 10am and 7pm on February 14 and prior to the sale. Call 01902 421985.

Tributes are paid to Elsie's club work

A COMMUNITY champion who helped run a senior citizens club in Halesowen for 25 years has died aged 78.

Elsie Maybury was co-ordinator at the Senior Citizens Drop In Centre, Andrew Road, for 15 years, a member of St John the Baptist Church and active in community activities.

Centre friends nominated her for the 2011 Mayor of Dudley's Civic Awards.

Belle Vale councillor Jill Nicholls said: "We want to keep the centre going in Elsie's memory."

Raised in Quinton by parents Jessie and Tom Weston, who ran a butchers shop in the high street, the family, including Mrs Maybury's four brothers, moved to Peckingham Street, Halesowen.

She was a nurse for nine years at Hayley Green Hospital, Halesowen, and Dudley Guest Hospital and met future husband Jeff through her brother Tom, known by all as Lewis, while they were in the Royal Navy.

She wed at St John the Baptist Church in November 1956 but for nine months Mr Maybury was stationed abroad.

They lived in Hagley Road, Halesowen, and had three children – Ian, Mary and Catherine. They have five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

She died last month. More than 170 people attended a service in her memory at St John the Baptist Church.

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in Manchester

Day excursion, Saturday 13 April 2013

Don't miss CATS, Andrew Lloyd-Webber's extraordinary record-breaking, smash-hit musical as it returns to Manchester.

Adapted from TS Eliot's 'Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats', this wonderful blend of fantasy, drama and romance is set on the night that the Jellicle Cats meet for the Jellicle Ball in a sparkling fusion of music, dance and verse.

With an amazing musical score that includes the timeless "Memory", spectacular set designs, stunning costumes and breathtaking choreography, CATS is a magical musical like no other.

One of the longest-running shows in West End and Broadway history, CATS has enchanted audiences in over 300 cities around the world – now you too have the chance to experience this legendary musical phenomenon.

- A Gallery seat with a face value of £27.50 for the matinee performance of Cats at the Opera House Theatre, Manchester. Please note the Gallery is high with steep steps – if you wish to upgrade to Circle seats with a face value of £32, there is a supplement of £5pp
- Free time in Manchester
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CLUB NEWS

History of servants dished up 'Birdman' ruffles feathers with talk

COVEN WI

COVEN WI members had a busy December, hosting the Ringhills Group carol service at St Pauls Church, which was well attended followed by mince pies.

Some members participated in the annual carol service at Lichfield Cathedral, others enjoyed an afternoon at Wightwick Manor. The group's own Christmas party was a great success.

The New Year saw the group welcome Patricia Boyd who presented Upstairs and Downstairs.

She proved to be a knowledgeable humorous and charismatic speaker and the ladies proved a captive audience.

Patricia imparted many historical facts relating to the army of servants employed by the well-to-do and she brought along many props, photographs and tea towels all depicting the era. The war years, the vote for women and social economical changes resulted in a wind of change and a huge depletion of servants.

On Tuesday, February 12 at Coven Memorial Hall from 7.30pm, the group is looking forward to Scott Petrek of the Wildlife Trust who will present Doxey Marshes.

There will also be a sales table of miscellaneous items.

On February 18, the group will enjoy a meal out to celebrate the anniversary of its formation.

Phone 01902 790417 for more details.



Guest speaker Colin McShane - Birdman Of Brewood

SHARESHILL WI

AT THE January meeting, Colin McShane talked to the group about our 'Feathered friends'.

Known as the Birdman of Brewood and a member of Brewood Ringers, he gave a really interesting and amusing talk about the lives and habits of those birds visiting our gardens.

Members learned how to recognise them, how they feed and how to help them through the winter.

Finally, Colin encouraged the ladies to join in with the RSPB's big bird watch and members armed with counting forms will be ready to check on bird life in their gardens.

Festive activities well supported by members

CHRISTMAS activities were all well supported by members of the guild when the Haven Singers came to entertain.

Several members were able to attend the carol service at St John's in the Square where the ladies met up with other local guilds and the ever-popular Marston Singers.

A Christmas Lunch at the Goldthorn Hotel was very

WOMBOURNE E TOWNSWOMEN

good and our festive tree at the URC helped to raise £505.

Speaker Edwin Shore made another welcome visit in January with a most interesting and entertaining talk - entitled 'National Service. Chris Corns held a

coffee morning in aid of Wings on January 24 and there will be a visit to Wolverhampton Art Gallery on February 21 at 10.30am.

At the next meeting on February 14, the annual subscriptions are due and the talk is about the Ifakara Bakery Project.

It takes place from 7.30pm in Wombourne Community Centre. Visitors are always welcome.

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Alternatively you may like to hire a car to explore the island at your leisure, again this can be booked at the hotel reception and the car will also be brought to the hotel for your convenience.

You have two hotels to choose from, both located in St Helier and a short walk from the town centre. The Mayfair Hotel is near to the famous Howard Davis Park while the Metropole is set within its own beautiful gardens and boasts an outdoor swimming pool.

Departure dates offered are April 15, October 13 and 14 (four nights), May 20 (six nights), June 19 and 23, July 21 and 24, August 25 and 26, September 22 and 23 (all seven nights). Alternative dates and durations are available on a request basis from Modern Travel Centre.

INFO

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- Overnight bed and breakfast accommodation at the Waldorf Hilton Hotel, London
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Four days departing March 29

★ **PRICE FROM £255**

- Return coach travel
- Three nights half-board accommodation
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Four days departing Apr 19, Jun 21, Sep 13

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The John Smith's Grand National

Two days departing April 6

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Eight days various departure dates

★ **PRICE FROM £599**

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- Guided tours of Verona and Venice
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- Services of a tour manager
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- Six nights bed and breakfast accommodation
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- Guided tours of Heidelberg and Strasbourg
- Tours of the Rhine Valley and the wine route in Alsace
- Services of a tour manager
- Single rooms subject to availability - supplement applies

Organised by Riviera Travel (ABTA V4744)

New England in the Fall

Eight days departing in October

★ **PRICE FROM £969**

- Return flights
- Six nights room-only hotel accommodation
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What's On! Halesowen

Time warp classic that is timeless

The Rocky Horror Show, New Alex, B-ham

CELEBRATING its 40th year, Richard O'Brien's cult hit *The Rocky Horror Show* remains the sexiest stage musical on the planet.

For the uninitiated, it is a hilarious celebration of the B-movie, following newly engaged couple Brad and Janet as they take shelter at the home of a mad transvestite scientist, Frank-N-Furter, who has been building the perfect muscle man.

The latest production, directed by Christopher Luscombe, will not have disappointed die-hard fans who, as always came dressed, in their wigs and suspenders and rocked along to the Time Warp.

Of particular note were Roxanne Pallett, playing Janet, Ben Forster as Brad, and Philip Franks narrating. Rhydian kept up with the best of them.

As is traditional, the audience interjected with regular vulgar outbursts (leave the kids at home for this one). *Rocky Horror* runs until Saturday.

Will Ackermann

Diamond tribute sparkles in show

Real Diamond, The Grand, W-ton

NEIL Diamond fans were rewarded with a real gem of a show, celebrating the singer's 73rd birthday.

John Hylton's vocal tribute to his hero was as near as one can get to the legend himself.

Les Jowett

Classic Christie whodunnits bring mystery and murder

MYSTERY grips two theatres in the region with the arrival on tour of a pair of Agatha Christie plays, one of them the most famous whodunnit in British stage history.

The Mousetrap, the longest running show in the West End with more than 25,000 performances during 60 years, is coming to Birmingham New Alexandra Theatre as part of its first UK tour, to mark its diamond anniversary.

It's at the Alex from Monday to Saturday with a cast including Karl Howman (from TV's *Brushstrokes*), Bruno Langley (Coronation Street), Graham Seed (from radio's *The Archers*) and former *EastEnders* Elizabeth Power, Steven France, Jemma Walker and Clare Wilkie. Bob Saul reprises his West End role as Sgt Trotter.

Rock and soul gigs to relish

AN EXCELLENT late winter and spring for gigs is in prospect in the Black Country and Birmingham.

Highlights include a visit by legendary Stax and Blues Brothers guitarist Steve Cropper, teaming up with members of The Animals at The Robin 2 in Bilston tonight (Thursday).

Chart-topping teenaged singer-songwriter Jake Bugg is at Birmingham HMV Institute on February 19.

BBC DJ and former Fun Lovin' Criminal, Huey Morgan brings his New Yorkers to the Slade Rooms, Wolverhampton, on March 9.

Welsh rockers The Stereophonics road test new album *Graffiti On The Train* at Wolverhampton Civic on March 16.

Daughter

The Mousetrap is also going to be staged at Wolverhampton Grand in late May.

Meanwhile, The Official Agatha Christie Theatre Company bring *Go Back To Murder*, in which a daughter seeks to clear her mother's name, to the Grand from Monday to Saturday.

The star-studded cast includes film and TV actors Sophie Ward (Land Girls), Lysette Anthony (Three Up Three Down), Robert Duncan (Drop The Dead Donkey), Ben Nealon (Soldier Soldier), Gary Mavers (Peak Practice) and Smethwick-born Liza Goddard.



Opera and family combine in a poignant theme for comedian Mark Thomas

Bravo idea for comic's latest tour

COMEDIAN and activist Mark Thomas has exposed arms dealers and abuses of civil liberties and is as handy with a megaphone as a microphone - holding the world record for the most individual protests held in a day.

In recent years he has been rambling along the Israeli border and travelled around Britain collecting clauses for his Manifesto, on BBC Radio 4.

But the theme of his latest tour is a more personal affair, the story of Mark's father, a builder with a love of opera. It tells of the comedian's attempt to put an opera on at the Bournemouth bungalow home of his father, who has a degenerative disease.

It is about love, death, fathers and sons, and the search for peace... with quite a few gags thrown in.

The Bravo Figaro tour brings him to Stourbridge Town Hall on Friday, February 15. Meanwhile, he will be back to his Manifesto at the Glee Club in Birmingham on Thursday, March 7.

Felons' farce is criminal genius

The Ladykillers, Grand W-ton

SCREENWRITER William Rose's original black comedy, about a criminal gang posing as a string ensemble to fool their elderly landlady, is given a broad farce treatment aiming for big laughs, which it achieves. An excellent cast and an ingenious set ensure a satisfying production.

Paul Bown is a treat as the slightly deranged would-be criminal mastermind whilst Michelle Dotrice is his delightful nemesis as the semi-senile, stubborn senior.

The rest of the gang are colourful characters too, William Troughton as a pill-popping young villain, Cliff Parisi as a word-mangling Romanian cut-throat, Clive Mantle as a nervous coman with transvestite tendencies and Chris McCaffhy as a punch-drunk former boxer with a soft streak.

The other star is Michael Taylor's award-nominated set, a lopsided and subsidised skewiff Victorian house. This is an exuberant play and runs until Saturday.

Leon Burakowski

Singers to bring sound of musicals

STARLIGHT Singers will perform numbers from musicals at Stourport Civic Hall on February 9.

Tickets for the event, costing £9, are available by calling 01562 638864 or 07746 675314 or from the Civic Hall Box Office.

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What's On!

SATURDAY'S TV 2.02.13

Listings supplied by Press Association

CHOICE



Clare Balding

Britain's Brightest

BBC1, 7pm
Given his offbeat turns on Mock the Week, it's little wonder Milton Jones' star has been on the rise for some years now. This week he'll be helping to raise a few laughs on Clare Balding's puzzle-themed show, and with next week's final being the main focus for the final six contestants, it'll be intriguing to see who has the right stuff to make it through to the series end. Aside from Mr Jones, other challenges involve those nutty boys/men Madness, and a German bottle band. As ever the self-confessed brainboxes aim to get that one step closer to claiming the prize of £50,000.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. 10.00 Saturday Kitchen Live. 11.30 The Good Cook. (R) 12.00 BBC News; Regional News; Weather. 12.15 Football Focus. 1.00 Live Six Nations Rugby Union. 3.30 Live Six Nations Rugby Union. 5.55 BBC News; Regional News; Weather. 6.15 Pointless Celebrities. With brother and sister Colin Jackson and Suzanne Packer. (R)
7.00 Britain's Brightest. The last six contestants compete for the remaining place in next week's final, taking on challenges involving pop group Madness, comedian Milton Jones and a German bottle band.
8.00 The National Lottery: In It to Win It. Dale Winton presents the quiz in which five contestants pit their wits to scoop a big cash prize. Includes the National Lottery draws, presented by Myleene Klass.
8.50 Casualty. Jordan's return to Holby reaches a dramatic climax when he is called upon to save the life of the person who killed his girlfriend. Michael French stars.
9.40 Mrs Brown's Boys. Rory and Dino have a bust-up. Mark and Betty announce their imminent departure to Australia and a strange phone call causes the Brown children to suspect one of them may be adopted. (R)
10.10 BBC News; Weather. 10.30 Match of the Day. Including action from Fulham v Manchester United; National Lottery Update.
12.00 The Football League Show. 1.15 Weather. 1.20 BBC News.

BBC2

6.00 Film: Devil's Canyon. (1953) **7.30 Great British Menu.** (R) **8.00 Great British Menu.** (R) **8.30 Great British Menu.** (R) **9.00 Great British Menu.** (R) **9.30 Great British Menu.** (R) **10.00 A History of Britain by Simon Schama.** (R) **11.00 Meet the Ancestors.** (R) **11.30 Map Man.** (R) **12.00 Indian Food Made Easy.** (R) **12.30 Mastermind.** (R) **1.00 University Challenge.** (R) **1.30 Talking Pictures. 2.10 Film: Anchors Aweigh.** (1945) **4.25 Final Score. 5.30 The Great Comic Relief Bake Off.** (R)
6.30 Flog It! James Lewis and Kate Bliss value items in Stroud. (R)
7.00 Top Gear. The motoring magazine returns. Jeremy Clarkson builds a small car and pitches the concept in the Dragons' Den, and Damian Lewis is the Star in a Reasonably Priced Car. (R)
8.00 Dad's Army. Sergeant Wilson joins the aristocracy. (R)
8.30 Natural World: Kangaroo Dundee. Part two of two. Broga continues to raise the three joey he rescued in his one-room tin shack in the Outback, but one of them is seriously ill.
9.30 Howard Goodall's Story of Music. The composer examines the extraordinarily fertile musical period between 1650 and 1750, which saw innovations including the orchestra, the overture, modern tuning and the piano. Also on BBC HD at 11pm.
10.30 QI XL. With Nina Conti, Sean Lock and Bill Bailey. (R)
11.15 Film: The Good Shepherd. (2006) Fact-based spy drama, starring Matt Damon and Robert De Niro.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Handy Manny. 6.10 Handy Manny. 6.25 The Hive. (R) 6.35 The Hive. (R) 6.40 Dino Dan. (R) 6.55 Dino Dan. (R) 7.05 Almost Naked Animals. (R) 7.15 Almost Naked Animals. (R) 7.30 Almost Naked Animals. (R) 7.40 Matt Hatter Chronicles. (R) 8.05 Ultimate Spider-Man. 8.30 Victorious. (R) 9.00 Jessie. 9.25 ITV News. 9.30 The Jeremy Kyle Show USA. 10.25 The Jeremy Kyle Show USA. 11.20 Saturday Cookbook. (R) 12.20 ITV News; Weather. 12.25 Murder, She Wrote. (R) 1.25 Countrywise. (R) 1.40 My Tasty Travels with Lynda Bellingham. (R) 2.40 Dinner Date. (R) 3.45 Film: The Flintstones. (1994) **5.30 Regional Programme; Weather. 5.45 ITV News; Weather. 6.00 New You've Been Framed! Top 100 Talent.
7.00 Splash! The final, which sees the four remaining celebrity divers attempting to somersault, twist and pike their way to victory. Last in the series.
8.30 Take Me Out. A guitar teacher, a 999 call operator, a choir leader and a butcher enter the love life in the hope of impressing 30 single women. Paddy McGuinness presents the dating show.
9.45 The Jonathan Ross Show. The host chats to comedian Eddie Izzard, broadcaster and naturalist David Attenborough, stand-up-turned-actor Russell Brand and action-film star Dolph Lundgren. With music by Pulp.
10.50 ITV News; Weather. 11.05 Film: Pride and Prejudice. (2005) Period drama, starring Keira Knightley.
1.25 Jackpot247. 2.55 In Plain Sight. (R) 3.40 ITV Nightscreen.**

CHANNEL 4

**6.05 Sali Mali. (R) 6.10 The Hoobs. (R) 6.35 The Hoobs. (R) 7.05 Beach Volleyball. 8.00 The Morning Line. 9.00 Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) 9.30 Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) 10.00 Frasier. (R) 10.30 Frasier. (R) 11.00 The Big Bang Theory. (R) 11.30 The Big Bang Theory. (R) 12.00 The Simpsons. (R) 12.30 Undercover Boss Australia. (R) 1.30 Channel 4 Racing. 4.00 Come Dine with Me: Ireland. 4.30 Come Dine with Me: Ireland. 5.05 Come Dine with Me: Ireland. 5.35 Come Dine with Me: Ireland.
6.05 Come Dine with Me: Ireland. Former lawyer Fiona Buckley, now a nut trader, hopes her belly of pork main will be enough to win her the 1,000 euro prize as she hosts the final dinner party in Cork.
6.35 Channel 4 News. 7.05 4thought..tv. People of different faiths talk about how their religion views the consumption of alcohol.
7.10 Film: Crocodile Dundee. (1986) An Australian hunter with a larger-than-life reputation accompanies a reporter from the Outback to the urban jungle of Manhattan. Comedy, starring Paul Hogan and Linda Kozlowski.
9.00 World Without End. Mother Cecilia sends Caris to France to petition the king, who is desperate to find a way for his army to cross the River Somme, otherwise they will be trapped and under siege.
10.00 Film: Along Came a Spider. (2001) Detective thriller, starring Morgan Freeman.
12.05 Film: Chatroom. (2010) Comedy, with Nicole Kidman. **3.20 Hollyoaks. 5.25 Countdown. (R)****

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake! 10.00 Power Rangers Samurai. (R) 10.35 Batman: The Brave and the Bold. 11.10 Inside Hollywood 2013. 11.20 The Gadget Show. (R) 12.20 Police Interceptors. (R) 1.20 Film: Mrs Caldwell's Cabbage War. (2000) **3.30 Film: Desperate Escape. (2009) **5.15 Film: By Appointment Only.** (2007)
6.50 5 News Weekend. 6.55 NCIS. (R) 7.45 NCIS. Gibbs sends DiNozzo and Ziva on a decoy mission to retrieve top-secret information from a secure military base, in a bid to expose a spy in NCIS. (R)
8.40 Law & Order. A cop is murdered during a botched robbery, triggering an investigation that leads Green and Cassidy to a paparazzo who may have compromising photos of a celebrity. (R)
9.40 Law & Order: Special Victims Unit. New series. The detectives are forced to rely on an officer from another district when a rape victim refuses to talk to anyone but him, while introductions to the new ADA go badly.
10.40 Law & Order: Criminal Intent. New series. Part one of two. Goren and Eames investigate an illegal arms deal.
11.35 True Crimes: The First 72 Hours. A sexual predator is caught by behavioural and geographical profiling.
12.05 SuperCasino. 4.00 Michaela's Wild Challenge. (R) 4.25 Divine Designs. (R) 4.50 County Secrets. (R) 5.05 Hana's Helpline. (R) 5.15 The Milkshake! Show. (R) 5.40 Thomas & Friends. (R) 5.50 Roary the Racing Car. (R)**

DIGITAL

BBC Three
7.00 Merlin 7.45 Doctor Who 8.35 Film: Cool Runnings (1993). Fact-based sporting comedy, starring John Candy. **10.10 Russell Howard's Good News Extra 10.55 Family Guy 11.40 American Dad!**
BBC Four
7.00 Lost Land of the Volcano 8.00 The Treasures of Ancient Rome 9.00 Borgen 11.00 Queens of British Pop
ITV2
5.50 Film: Toy Story (1995) **7.35 Film: Back to the Future Part II** (1989). Sci-fi comedy sequel, starring Michael J Fox. **9.45 Take Me Out - The Gossip 10.30 Fake Reaction 11.15 Film: Wanted** (2008). Action adventure, starring James McAvoy and Angelina Jolie.
ITV3
2.50 A Touch of Frost 5.00 Agatha Christie's Marple 7.00 Doc Martin 8.00 Midsomer Murders 9.00 Film: The Graduate (1967)
ITV4
2.30 Live Africa Cup of Nations. The opening quarter-final (Kick-off 3.00pm). **5.15 Cheers 5.45 World of Sport: Footballing Upsets 6.00 Live Africa Cup of Nations.** The second quarter-final (Kick-off 6.30pm). **9.00 Champions League Heroes 10.00 Film: Nightwings** (1981)
E4
3.35 Rules of Engagement 6.00 The Big Bang Theory 7.00 Happy Endings 8.00 How I Met Your Mother 8.30 2 Broke Girls 9.00 Film: Top Gun (1986) **11.10 The Big Bang Theory**
Film4
3.05 Murder Ahoy (1964) **4.55 Little Manhatn (2005) 6.40 Mona Lisa Smile** (2003) **8.00 The A-Team** (2010) Action adventure, starring Liam Neeson. **11.20 Orphan** (2009)

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What's On!

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SUNDAY'S TV 3.02.13

CHOICE



Brian Cox

Wonders of Life

BBC2, 9pm
Professor Brian Cox is everywhere at the minute. University lecturer by day, stargazer and the Beeb's most intriguing presenter by night, it's little wonder he finds the time to fit it all in. But that he does, and he stretches himself even further as his new series Wonders of Life continues. The physicist is making his way around the globe, on a mission to investigate whether the emergence of life was an inevitable consequence of the physical laws that rule the universe. This week, Brian finds himself doing what most of us often dream of; tripping across America.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **7.25** Match of the Day. (R) **9.00** The Andrew Marr Show. **10.00** The Big Questions. **11.00** Sunday Politics: Weather for the Week Ahead. **12.25** Countryfile. (R) **1.25** Call the Midwife. (R) **2.25** Live Six Nations Rugby Union. **5.00** Africa. (R) **6.00** **BBC News:** Regional News; Weather. **6.30** **Blandings.** David Walliams returns as no-nonsense secretary Baxter. **7.00** **Countryfile.** Items from the snowy Yorkshire Dales, including cheese-making at Jervaulx Abbey in the style of the Cistercian monks and following a veterinary couple on their farm rounds. Including Weather for the Week Ahead. **8.00** **Call the Midwife.** Jenny is seconded to a short-staffed hospital in London, but intimidating surgeon Mr Tracey leaves her reluctant to carry out her duties. **9.00** **Ripper Street.** Reid senses something amiss when a Jewish anarchist is found dead, leading the team into the murky world of the British government's fight against international terrorism. **10.00** **BBC News:** Regional News; Weather. **10.25** **Match of the Day 2.** Including highlights of Manchester City v Liverpool. **11.15** **Room 101 – Extra Storage.** With Cilla Black, Hugh Dennis and Mel Giedroyc. **11.55** **The Sky at Night.** From the Royal Observatory, Greenwich. **12.15** **The Celebrity Apprentice USA.** **1.40** Six Nations Rugby Union. **2.25** Weatherview. **2.30** BBC News.

BBC2

6.00 Close. **6.50** **Film:** A Walk in the Sun. (1945) **8.45** Life in a Cottage Garden with Carol Klein. (R) **9.15** A to Z of TV Gardening. **10.00** Saturday Kitchen Best Bites. **11.30** The Little Paris Kitchen: Cooking with Rachel Khoo. (R) **12.00** EastEnders. (R) **1.55** Coast. **2.10** Natural World: Kangaroo Dundee. (R) **3.10** Natural World: Kangaroo Dundee. (R) **4.10** The Great Comic Relief Bake Off. (R) **5.10** Songs of Praise. **5.45** Ski Sunday. **6.30** **Orbit: Earth's Extraordinary Journey.** Kate Humble and Helen Czerski follow the earth's journey around the sun from the March equinox to the end of June. Last in the series. (R) **7.30** **Open All Hours.** Granville tries to persuade Arkwright to buy a van, so he does not have to struggle with the shop's outdated delivery bike. (R) **8.00** **Top Gear.** Jeremy Clarkson, Richard Hammond and James May pilot three front-engined supercars on a road trip from Las Vegas to Palm Springs via Los Angeles. With drummer Mick Fleetwood. **9.00** **Wonders of Life.** Professor Brian Cox encounters extraordinary creatures in the US as he investigates how the senses evolved, charting life's journey from single-celled organisms to sentient beings. **10.00** **A Night with the Stars.** Professor Brian Cox explores challenging concepts in physics. (R) **11.00** **Live American Football: Super Bowl XLVII.** San Francisco 49ers v Baltimore Ravens (Kick-off 11.30pm).

ITV

6.00 CITV: Handy Manny. **6.10** Handy Manny. **6.25** The Hive. (R) **6.35** The Hive. (R) **6.40** Dino Dan. (R) **6.55** Dino Dan. (R) **7.05** Almost Naked Animals. (R) **7.15** Almost Naked Animals. (R) **7.30** Sunday Brunch. **12.05** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **8.05** Rated A for Awesome. **8.15** Rated A for Awesome. **8.30** Big Time Rush. **9.00** The Aquabats Super Show. **9.25** ITV News. **9.30** House Guest in the Sun. (R) **10.25** 60 Minute Makeover. (R) **11.25** May the Best House Win Vive la France. (R) **12.25** ITV News; Weather. **12.35** Dickinson's Real Deal. (R) **1.35** Rosemary & Thyme. (R) **2.35** You've Been Framed! (R) **3.05** Film: Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone. (2001) **5.50** Regional Programme; Weather. **6.05** **ITV News:** Weather. **6.15** **Dancing on Ice.** **7.45** **All Star Family Fortunes.** With actress Samantha Womack and McFly's Tom Fletcher. **8.30** **Dancing on Ice: The Skate Off.** The two lowest-scoring contestants perform new routines, with the judges deciding which couple deserves another chance and a place in next week's show. **9.00** **Mr Selfridge.** Harry hits rock bottom after a confrontation with Rose, who has received a visit from his mistress Ellen Love, while Agnes falls out with Victor when she returns to the store. **10.00** **ITV News at Ten:** Weather. **10.15** **It'll Be Alright on the Night.** Celebrity bloopers with Griff Rhys Jones. (R) **11.15** **Anglo-Welsh Cup Rugby Union.** **12.10** The Store. **2.15** Monk. (R) **2.55** ITV Nightscreen. **5.05** The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R)

CHANNEL 4

6.10 The Hoobs. (R) **6.35** The Hoobs. (R) **7.05** Will & Grace. (R) **7.30** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **7.55** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.25** Frasier. (R) **8.55** Frasier. (R) **9.30** Sunday Brunch. **12.05** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **12.35** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **1.00** The Simpsons. (R) **1.35** The Simpsons. (R) **2.05** Film: Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan. (1982) **4.20** Time Team. **5.20** Deal or No Deal. **6.20** **Channel 4 News.** **6.50** **4thought.tv.** Alcohol consumption and religion. **6.55** **The Political Slot.** A day in the life of Conservative Party Chairman Grant Shapps. **7.00** **Come Dine with Me.** A week of dinner parties in Edinburgh, featuring an "around-the-world menu, a sweetie darling" theme and a stab at some Heston Blumenthal-style cooking. **8.00** **The Hotel.** Mark wants a Christian to become more cost-conscious and gives him a chance to prove himself by asking him to organise a wedding fair and oversee a local couple's nuptials. **9.00** **Film: Source Code.** (2011) Premiere. A pilot investigates a bombing by having his mind transferred into one of the victims for the last eight minutes of his life. Sci-fi thriller, with Jake Gyllenhaal. **10.50** **Film: The Accused.** (1988) Oscar-winning drama, starring Jodie Foster. **12.55** **Film: Rebound.** (2005) Comedy, with Martin Lawrence. **2.20** Smallville. **3.00** Coming Up. (R) **3.30** St Elsewhere. **4.15** Deal or No Deal. (R) **5.10** Countdown. (R) **5.55** Quick Bakes with Eric Lanlard.

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake!: Peppa Pig. **6.05** Roary the Racing Car. (R) **6.15** Fif and the Flowerpots. (R) **6.25** Bert and Ernie's Great Adventures. (R) **6.30** The Mr Men Show. (R) **6.45** Olive the Ostrich. (R) **6.50** Abby's Flying Fairy School. (R) **7.00** Roobarb and Custard Too. (R) **7.10** Bananas in Pyjamas. (R) **7.20** Animal Antics. (R) **7.30** Make Way for Noddy. (R) **7.40** Milkshake! Monkey. (R) **7.45** City of Friends. (R) **7.55** Little Princess. (R) **8.10** The Adventures of Bottle Top Ball and His Best Friend Corky. (R) **8.20** Mio Mao. (R) **8.25** Angelina Ballerina. (R) **8.40** Milkshake! Show Songs. (R) **8.45** Rupert Bear. (R) **9.00** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) **9.15** Toby's Travelling Circus. (R) **9.25** Little Lodgers. (R) **9.30** Roary the Racing Car. (R) **9.45** Jolly Jamm. **10.00** Power Rangers Samurai. (R) **10.35** Batman: The Brave and the Bold. **11.10** Looney Tunes. (R) **11.20** Once Upon a Time. (R) **12.20** Film: The Princess Bride. (1987) **2.10** Titanic. (R) **5.25** 5 News Weekend. **5.35** Film: The Witches. (1990) **7.15** **Film: The Time Machine.** (2002) Sci-fi adventure, based on the HG Wells novel. **9.00** **Person of Interest.** The Machine directs Reese and Finch to protect a lawyer who specialises in suing on behalf of convicts who claim they were wrongfully imprisoned. **10.00** **Film: Rambo.** (2008) Action sequel, directed by and starring Sylvester Stallone. **11.45** **Ice Road Truckers.** (R) **12.45** How Do They Do It? (R) **1.15** SuperCasino. **4.00** Michaela's Wild Challenge. (R) **4.25** Divine Designs. (R) **4.50** County Secrets. (R) **5.05** Hana's Helpline. (R) **5.15** The Milkshake! Show. (R) **5.40** Thomas & Friends. (R) **5.50** Roary the Racing Car. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Three
7.00 Great Movie Mistakes 2011: Not in 3D **7.05** Wallace & Gromit: The Wrong Trousers **7.35** Film: Superman Returns (2006). **10.00** Being Human **11.00** Family Guy **11.45** American Dad!
BBC Four
7.00 The Story of British Pathé **8.00** Harlots, Housewives & Heroines: A 17th Century History for Girls **9.00** Frank Sinatra: The Voice of the Century – Arena Special **10.35** Film: The Salt of Life (2011)
ITV2
3.55 Take Me Out – The Gossip **4.40** The Best of You've Been Framed! **5.40** Film: Back to the Future Part III (1990) **8.00** You've Been Framed! Calendar Special **9.00** The Magaluf Weekender **10.00** Film: The Bourne Identity (2002)
ITV3
3.55 Agatha Christie's Marple **5.45** Murder, She Wrote **6.40** Agatha Christie's Poirot **9.00** David Jason's Greatest Escapes **10.00** Film: Schindler's List (1993)
ITV4
2.30 Live Africa Cup of Nations. **5.15** Cheers **5.45** Greatest FA Cup Finals **6.00** Live Africa Cup of Nations. **9.00** Anglo-Welsh Cup Rugby Union **10.00** Film: The Magnificent Seven (1960)
E4
5.00 Revenge **6.00** The Big Bang Theory **7.00** New Girl **8.00** Film: Romancing the Stone (1984) **10.05** What Happens in Kavos **11.05** My Mad Fat Diary
Film4
3.05 Because of Winn-Dixie (2005) **5.10** The Honeymooners (2005) **6.55** Shopgirl (2005) Romantic comedy, starring Claire Danes and Steve Martin. **9.00** Assault on Precinct 13 (2005) **11.10** M*A*S*H (1970)

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What's On!

Film Choices

MONDAY

The Punisher, Channel 5, 10pm

FBI agent Frank Castle enrages a powerful gangland kingpin when a gunfight accidentally causes the death of the mobster's son. The crime boss retaliates by wiping out Castle's entire family, but the lawman reinvents himself as a vigilante, acting as judge, jury and executioner to the underworld. Thriller based on the Marvel comic-book anti-hero, starring Thomas Jane, John Travolta, Will Patton, Rebecca Romijn and Roy Scheider. (2004)

TUESDAY

Rumble in the Bronx, BBC1, 11.35pm

A Hong Kong cop visits New York to attend the wedding of his uncle, who has just sold his market store to an entrepreneur. The policeman volunteers to stick around to help get the business running, but they soon fall foul of a local biker gang. Martial arts adventure, starring Jackie Chan, Anita Mui, Francoise Yip and Bill Tung. (1995)



The Matrix Reloaded, Thursday, Channel 5, 10pm

WEDNESDAY

Black Death, BBC1, 11.40pm

As the bubonic plague sweeps across medieval Britain, one isolated community seems to be completely unaffected. A naive monk is sent to accompany a band of mercenaries to the village to determine if they have used witchcraft to ward off the disease. Thriller, starring Sean Bean, Eddie Redmayne and Carice van Houten. (2010)

THURSDAY

The Matrix Reloaded, Channel 5, 10pm

As the machines threaten the last refuge of humanity, a party of freedom fighters journeys into the virtual world of the Matrix to find a means to end the war once and for all. However, the computer programme Agent Smith, once a tool of the machines, has returned from the dead with his own plans for the world. Sci-fi thriller sequel, starring Keanu Reeves, Carrie-Anne Moss, Laurence Fishburne and Hugo Weaving. (2003)

FRIDAY

Bad Boys II, Channel 5, 9pm

Two mismatched undercover cops set out to halt an underground gang war and bring down a drug lord attempting to flood the market with a deadly form of Ecstasy. However, a romantic interlude threatens to drive the investigation off course. Comedy thriller sequel, starring Will Smith, Martin Lawrence, Gabrielle Union, Jordi Molla and Peter Stormare. (2003)

Pick of the Week

Clunes is in the saddle for his new adventure

Martin Clunes couldn't be less like Gary, his Men Behaving Badly character, if he tried.

While Gary would like nothing more than to be drinking with his mate Tony, Martin would prefer to be on his Dorset farm, hanging out with his wife, producer Philippa Braithwaite, their daughter Emily and his ever-growing menagerie of animals.

Martin is besotted by his furry, four-legged friends. In fact, when he isn't making Doc Martin or some other TV drama, he can be found surrounded by them, either at home or while making a documentary.

Over the past few years he's featured in various programmes about dogs and lemuris – just last week he narrated another about canines.

Now he's back with a rather more personal project.

This second striding to his media career has come as a surprise, but he loves every minute of it: "It was never part of the plan, but I'd really miss presenting and the opportunities it's given me. It would

be silly of me to say, 'I won't do that because this might spoil my chances of another acting job'; because I might miss out on one of the biggest experiences of my life."

Two years ago, Martin adopted a couple of young Clydesdale draught horses – called Bruce and Ronnie – and they're now at an age where they're getting a little bored with just trotting around an empty field; their besotted 'father' describes them as "lovable but uncontrollable teenagers".

To give the duo some focus, Martin has brought in Robert Sampson, an equine expert who will turn 'the boys' into useful working horses – he'll coach Martin how to drive them properly too.

"If you'd said 10 years ago that I would be driving a seven and a half ton truck with my own two young Clydesdales and taking them to hoof camp, I'd have laughed in your face," claims Martin. "But it is a reality and it's very exciting."

Much of the programme is dedicated to following the progress of all three novices, but there's also

a chance to find out how working horses are employed across the globe, including by the Amish – and in stark contrast – Budweiser in America. However, it's a trip to an Italian vineyard that proves most eye-opening.

"A day working in that Italian vineyard is enough for me to think that having working horses on my farm can only be a good thing," laughs Martin, as he watches the animals driving carts while fertilising the land at the same time.

Then it's back to Blighty to see how Ronnie and Bruce are getting along – and the answer is very well. In fact, Martin's gentle, quiet approach to life seems to suit working with the duo rather well.

"I found this new speed quite shocking to begin with, very slow," he admits. "But I have a six month ban on my driving licence, so this speed could be my future – starting at my horses' bums as they plod me around the countryside."

"It's quite a nice way to go. Three cheers I say."



Martin Clunes – Heavy Horse Power, Thursday, ITV, 9pm

Best of the Rest

MONDAY

Dancing on the Edge BBC2, 9pm

If there was ever any doubt that writer-director Stephen Poliakoff's name carries a lot of clout, just look at the cast list for his new drama, which stars everyone from Chiwetel Ejiofor and Matthew Goode to John Goodman and Jacqueline Bisset, via Jane Asher and new Doctor Who assistant Jenna Louise Coleman. Perhaps the impressive cast were also attracted by the plot, which follows a black jazz band in 1930s London. Led by Louis Lester (Ejiofor), the group find a champion in music journalist Stanley (Matthew Goode), and some unlikely fans among the upper class. But even with wealthy patrons on their side, they still have to deal with the racial inequalities and shifting moral values of the time.

Richard III: The King in the Car Park Channel 4, 9pm

It's amazing what you can find in car parks these days: abandoned shopping trolleys, cigarette ends, the skeleton of one history's most infamous monarchs... This documentary looks at the search for the final resting place of Richard III, who was killed at the Battle of Bosworth Field in 1485. His body was buried in Greyfriar's Church in Leicester, but in the centuries that followed, the building was demolished and its exact location was lost to history. But all that changed in 2012 when archaeologists finally worked out that Greyfriar's stood on what is now a council car park. Here, we follow the scientists who are trying to establish if the male skeleton found at the site really is Richard III.

TUESDAY

Brain Hospital: Saving Lives Channel 5, 10pm

As we return to Liverpool's Walton Centre, this inspiring series introduces Martin and Marc who are undergoing brain treatment. Marc suffers from a chronic tremor which became worse during his teens. Surgeons hope that a 'deep brain stimulation' operation will help him control his condition. The engineer has already given up his job and lost the ability to do everyday tasks, so this treatment is crucial. Martin, a university dean and father of three in his fifties who has been diagnosed with cancer is equally optimistic. This operation will hopefully remove the malignant brain tumours, which if left untreated will only spread throughout his body.

WEDNESDAY Live International Football ITV, 7pm

The England national team return to action this evening as they face Brazil in a friendly match at Wembley Stadium, organised as part of the FAs 150th anniversary celebrations. England's last outing was a friendly away to Sweden last November, which will be remembered for the performance of Zlatan Ibrahimovich, who scored all of his team's goals in a 4-2 victory, including

a spectacular over-head volley from long distance. As with that game, the outcome of tonight's clash is not critical, but Roy Hodgson will appreciate the opportunity to gather his squad together for the first time this year, and see this as a good test against quality opposition before resuming the World Cup qualification campaign.

Holiday Hit Squad BBC1, 8pm

You wouldn't want to get on the wrong side of Angela Rippon, Helen Skelton or Joe Crowley. They've made their names in tough-talking telly, so throw them all together on the same project and there's every chance they're quite the force to be reckoned with. This new series combines journalism and travel advice to ensure we're fully clued up in making sure our holidays – no matter where in the world we find ourselves – live up to their promise. As Angela joins the professionals who devote their lives to helping British tourists in Majorca, Helen meets unhappy holidaymakers, and Joe joins hotel inspectors in top holiday hotspots to learn about the hidden horrors.

Holiday Hit Squad, Wednesday, BBC1, 8pm

THURSDAY

How to Build a Bionic Man Channel 4, 9pm

The medical experts featured in this documentary are using £1million-worth of cutting-edge artificial limbs and organs in an attempt to create a bionic man that will then be displayed at London's Science Museum. This summer's Paralympic Games demonstrated how far modern technology has come in its ability to replace body parts and improve abilities, but presenter and psychologist Bertolt Meyer – who has a bionic hand – wants to find out how such technological developments may impact on the human race in the future. Whatever conclusions he draws will be fascinating – but not as intriguing as seeing how the bionic man at the centre of it all turns out.

FRIDAY Ice Road Truckers Channel 5, 8pm

It's Friday night, which only means one thing on Channel 5 – a good dose of heavyweight trucking that frankly makes us thankful for our safe-as-houses desk jobs. And for Dave it's not just the conditions through which he drives that are icy. In Prudhoe, he's having trouble making friends with his new colleagues, and when his brakes freeze, his little help by his fellow drivers. Things are going a little better for Lisa, though, when she's given the responsibility of driving half of the biggest load of the season so far. Meanwhile Alex Debgorski is given an 800-mile three-day trip to deliver vital food supplies to a remote outpost in Tadoula Lake.

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CRADLEY HEATH, TINSLEY AVENUE

Modern link detached house set in a cul de sac location. Within walking distance to Cradley Heath town centre and train station, this lovely home features gas central heating, 3 bedrooms, master bedroom with en-suite shower room, family bathroom, gas central heating, double glazing, front and rear gardens and side garage with driveway. EPC = C

£650 PCM



ROWLEY REGIS, ST GILES CLOSE

Driveway for 3 cars. An unfurnished detached house situated in a quiet cul-de-sac comprising of: through lounge/dining room, modern fitted kitchen, house bathroom with jacuzzi bath, 3 bedrooms, gas central heating, double glazing, garage and driveway parking, rear garden. EPC = D

£650 PCM



HALESOWEN, TANHOUSE LANE

Ideally located for Coley Lane Primary School, local shops in Coley Gate, bus routes to Halesowen, Stourbridge and Merry Hill, this lovely semi-detached home features 2 good size bedrooms with 2 having fitted wardrobes, modern fitted kitchen, 3 good size lounges and conservatory. Well worth viewing. EPC = C

£600 PCM



MERRY HILL, MADISON AVENUE

Flexible accommodation. A spacious unfurnished modern townhouse, within walking distance of Merry Hill shopping centre, featuring kitchen, downstairs WC, dining room/study, lounge, bathroom, 3 bedrooms, master en-suite shower room, allocated parking space. EPC = C

£595 PCM



HALESOWEN, WROXLEY HOUSE

Luxury living in Hayley Green. This superb luxury ground floor apartment offers spacious accommodation including open plan lounge/kitchen and diner with balcony, 2 double bedrooms, master with en-suite, further well appointed bathroom with shower, gas central heating, double glazing and allocated parking. EPC = B

£595 PCM



CRADLEY HEATH, BARRS ROAD

Beautiful living room. An end terraced unfurnished property, recently refurbished to a high standard and situated in a popular residential area which is ideal for Timberfree Primary School. Featuring 3 bedrooms, fitted kitchen with white goods, 2 reception rooms, off road parking with rear garden. EPC = D

£595 PCM



HALESOWEN, LINNET CLOSE

Desirable cul-de-sac location. Situated in a very popular area of the Lodgefield Estate with easy access to Halesowen and Cradley Heath, this unfurnished semi detached house features gas central heating, spacious living room, fitted kitchen with appliances, 2 bedrooms with 1 having wardrobes, modern bathroom with shower, front and rear gardens and driveway parking. EPC = E

£575 PCM



CRADLEY HEATH, HALESOWEN ROAD

3 bed family home. Located on this popular road, with easy access to Halesowen, Cradley Heath and local train station is this lovely semi detached house which features 2 double bedrooms and a single bedroom, spacious lounge, dining room, fitted kitchen, house bathroom with shower, front and rear gardens, parking to the rear and on road. Well worth a viewing. EPC = D

£575 PCM



TIPTON, PEARTREE AVENUE

Cul-de-sac location. This deceptively large 3 bedroom terraced house which is undergoing a re-decoration and re-carpeted features a spacious lounge, large modern fitted kitchen, house bathroom with shower, nice side garden, driveway parking and in a cul-de-sac location. EPC = C

£550 PCM



HALESOWEN, HAGLEY STREET

Fantastic refurbishment over 2 floors. A fully refurbished modern duplex apartment above an electrical shop in the very centre of Halesowen, featuring a large open plan living area with modern fitted kitchen, 2 bedrooms, bathroom with shower. By agreement £40 fixed electric charge. EPC = C

£550 PCM



HALESOWEN, BLOOMFIELD STREET NORTH

Extremely well presented and surprisingly large end terrace with off road parking. Within walking distance to Halesowen, local bus routes and shops, comprises 2 bedrooms, nice lounge, attractive fitted diner/kitchen with white goods excluding washing machine, utility room, house bathroom with shower, a glorious courtyard garden and gated driveway. EPC = E

£550 PCM



CRADLEY HEATH, PRINCE STREET

Refurbishment almost complete. Ideally located close to Cradley Heath town centre for the shops and train station, this unfurnished semi detached house which has had a complete re-decoration and new carpets, benefits from gas central heating, large lounge, new fitted kitchen, downstairs w.c., four bedrooms, shower room, front and very low maintenance rear garden, driveway parking. EPC = C

£545 PCM



HALESOWEN, FAIRMILE ROAD

Beautifully furnished. Situated in a popular residential area of Halesowen, with easy access to buses to the town, is this modern furnished first floor apartment comprising of 2 bedrooms, excellent natural light in lounge, modern fitted kitchen, bathroom with a shower, gas central heating, double glazing, garage parking, and communal gardens. EPC = E

£525 PCM



STOURBRIDGE, PROSPECT GARDENS

Desirable Oldswinford location. Close to Stourbridge Town Centre this newly redecorated, unfurnished mid terrace apartment comprises of 2 bedrooms, fitted dining kitchen, cosy lounge, gas central heating, double glazing, bathroom with shower, small rear garden, parking space to front. EPC=D

£525 PCM



STOURBRIDGE, CHAPEL STREET

A three bedroom link detached house within walking distance to lye shops, buses and train station, comprising of: lounge, kitchen, 3 bedrooms and bathroom, electric heating, double glazing, rear garden with patio, blocked paved driveway for two cars. Available immediately. EPC = F

£495 PCM



CRADLEY HEATH, DELINGPOLE WALK

Located on a popular development, close to Old Hill train station and local shops, featuring 2 bedrooms, gas central heating, living room, fitted kitchen, downstairs w.c., bathroom with shower, rear garden. EPC = B

£475 PCM



BRIERLEY HILL, FOXDALE DRIVE

Freshly redecorated and within 5 minutes drive of Brierley Hill town centre and few minutes more from Merry Hill shopping centre, we have this unfurnished end terrace house, comprising of: 1 double bedroom and 1 single bedroom, 1 with fitted wardrobes, house bathroom with shower, nice sized lounge, fitted kitchen, allocated parking, no garden. EPC = C

£475 PCM



DUDLEY, SOUTHGATE WAY

A stunning and spacious well presented unfurnished third floor apartment features 2 double bedrooms, electric storage heating, double glazing, open plan living room with fitted kitchen, house bathroom with shower, allocated parking space. Viewing highly recommended. Available immediately. EPC = B

£450 PCM



HALESOWEN, MANOR LANE

A furnished flat above shop, briefly comprising of: Gas Central Heating, Living Room, Large Fitted Kitchen, Double Bedroom, Shower Room, Secure Parking. EPC rating = C

£440 PCM



HALESOWEN, NETHEREND LANE

Well presented throughout. This unfurnished ground floor apartment is within walking distance to Cradley Heath train station, comprising of: modern fitted kitchen, lounge/dining room, bathroom with shower, one bedroom with built in wardrobes, en block garage. EPC rating = E

£380 PCM



HALESOWEN, APPERLEY WAY

Quiet location. An opportunity to acquire a spacious first floor apartment. Part furnished to suit tenant, on the ever popular Romer Hill estate, comprises: 1 double bedroom with fitted wardrobes, lounge with dining table and chairs, side table/coffee table, fitted kitchen with white goods, modern house bathroom with shower, driveway parking, available immediately. Ideal for first time renters. EPC = F

£375 PCM

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Ideal housing by woodlands to suit families



The Briars development in Kidderminster has homes priced from around £259,995



The intimate development has homes available through a part-exchange scheme

FAMILIES who want to get away from it all can make their nest at The Briars in Kidderminster, where some of the homes back on to woodland.

The popular development from Elan Homes is ideally located so that residents are able to enjoy the great outdoors close to home while also benefitting from easy access to the town centre and beyond thanks to the strong transport links. Plus with local schools with good reputations nearby, it's perfect for those with children.

It's not just the location that ticks all the right boxes for buyers – the homes enjoy a high specification that needs to be seen to be appreciated.

But with only a handful of properties available, each with four-bedrooms, those who want to move to The Briars need to act fast to avoid disappointment.

Andrew Robertson, senior sales manager for Elan Homes in the North,

says: "Choosing a home in which to raise a family can be tricky and people may fear they have to compromise on style or space to buy a home in the right location, but that's not necessarily the case. The Briars is within the catchment area of some fine local schools, several of which have been rated as 'outstanding' by Ofsted.

Comparison

"The homes are also competitively priced from £259,995 in comparison with other properties in the area as according to Zoopla the average asking price for a four-bedroom house in Kidderminster is £319,654."

If the location, specification and value for money wasn't enough, Elan is offering part exchange to help people climb the property ladder.

Designed to help speed up the home buying process, part exchange is ideal for those who but don't want to be held back from moving because they need to sell their current home.

With part exchange Elan will arrange for the customer's home to be

valued by two local agents before making an offer on that property to help facilitate a move. The transaction could be complete in as little as 28 days with no hidden costs or hold ups. The developer will pay for the survey and the agent's fees and customers will even be able to stay in their current property until the new one is ready.

Located in Habberley Road, The Briars is an intimate development of just 13 four-bedroom homes ideally placed between the Worcestershire countryside and Kidderminster town centre.

Easy access to the ring road and the M5 has attracted interest from commuters who work in Birmingham but want to raise their families away from the hustle and bustle.

To be in with a chance of purchasing one of the final homes at The Briars, visit the sales office, open Thursday to Monday from 10am to 5pm.

Alternatively, call 0845 250 8679 or visit the website www.elanhomes.co.uk



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Kenilworth Close



Offers Over £180,000

Detached four bedroom property briefly comprising dining room, extended lounge/diner, extended kitchen, downstairs shower room and rear garden.

Wrens Avenue



£170,000

Detached three bedroom property briefly comprising lounge, kitchen, conservatory, family bathroom, rear garden, driveway and garage.

Red Lion Close



£150,000

Detached three bedroom property briefly comprising lounge, conservatory, front and rear gardens.

MacDonald Close



Awaited

Whitehall Drive



Offers Over £140,000

Detached three bedroom property briefly comprising lounge, extended kitchen, conservatory and a integral garage.

Eagle Close



NEW

Offers Over £40,000

One bedroom second floor flat briefly comprising entrance hall, kitchen, lounge/diner, bedroom, bathroom, communal gardens and parking.

Fairfield Road



£205,000

An extended traditional end terrace house with accommodation comprising lounge, three bedrooms, rear garden and garage. Halesowen



Offers Over £150,000

End terrace three storey, three bedroom property briefly comprising lounge/diner, kitchen and master bedroom with en-suite.

Long Lane



£195,000

A three bedroom detached property. To the front are electric gates providing access to the driveway which leads to the garage. Halesowen

Cherry Orchard Crescent



£185,000

A three bedroom semi detached property comprising lounge, dining room, kitchen, driveway, garage and an extensive rear garden. Halesowen

Gawne Lane



Offers Over £180,000

Modern extended detached house with accommodation comprising lounge, four bedrooms and garage. Halesowen

Lodgefield Road



£180,000

Three bedroom detached property lounge, kitchen, first floor bathroom, double glazing and central heating (both where specified). Halesowen

Meres Road



Offers Over £120,000

Four bedroom end terrace property which has undergone a refurbishment program. The property comprises lounge, front and rear gardens. Halesowen

St. James Avenue



£90,000

Modern semi detached property with accommodation comprising lounge, kitchen, two bedrooms, drive, garage, front and rear gardens. Halesowen

Halesowen Road



£80,000

Traditional mid terraced property with accommodation comprising two reception rooms, kitchen and three bedrooms. Halesowen

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CHRONICLE MOTORING

Kia Sportage shines in crossover market

SOME companies are finding the going a bit tough in the Crossover market but the most recent Sportage is proving just how far Korean giant Kia has come in the UK.

Competition in the crossover sector is extremely fierce and the Sportage has been slowly carving out its own fan base and the arrival of the new KX-4 shows what a practical and smart contender this vehicle really is.

On sale since July in the UK there's a model to suit most pockets ranging from £17,300 to £28,500 and this compact SUV comes with a new diesel engine and higher standard of kit.

Four wheel drive is now standard and the Sportage KX-4 has a new 181bhp diesel engine producing 47bhp more than the former CRDi model.

And if you want to be noticed this might just be the car for you with futuristic styling ensuring you stand out in any company.

And while there's not a great deal of equipment inside this Kia's controls are refreshingly uncomplicated. Standard equipment includes leather upholstery, 18-inch alloy wheels, privacy glass, satellite-navigation, xenon headlights, automatic lights and wipers, panoramic sunroof, dual-zone climate control, heated front and rear seats and a reversing camera.

I'm not a massive fan of the reversing camera system but the Kia system is about as good as it gets. Handling is typical for the crossover sector and there is nothing to say this Kia is better than the opposition.

I find all crossovers a bit too bouncy once you're off the 'A' roads and the KX-4 is no exception.

Seating is comfortable enough in all departments and there's plenty of head and leg room while the driver's seat offers lots of adjustment while the steering wheel is easily adjusted for both reach and rake.

Isotix

Sportage comes with a full array of safety kit. There are front, side and curtain airbags, as well as active front head restraints, along with Isofix child-seat mountings for the outer rear seats.

Stability control and a hill-start system come as standard, too, as does a maximum five-star Euro NCAP crash-test rating.

Deadlocks, an alarm, locking wheelnuts and a visible VIN help to deter thieves.

The range-topping Sportage 'KX-4' boasts clever technology including an engine start/stop button with Smart Entry system, which means searching for your keys is a thing of the past.

There's also Parallel Park Assist System (PPAS) which steers you automatically into a space.

You need the confidence to tackle this but once you have mastered the system it's a dream.

Probably the best Kia I have driven, this Sportage is right up there with the best in class but the range topper may be out of the reach for some pockets.



Good looks with the performance to match sums up the Kia Sportage

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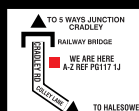
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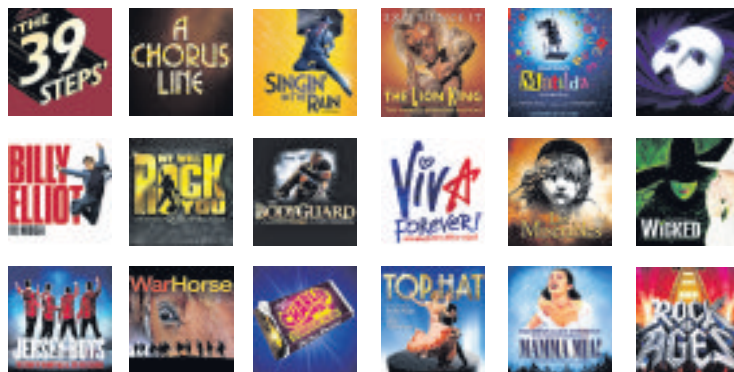
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MARIA French female looking for mutually convenient companionship, very friendly, very discreet and very interested in meeting with you! Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 397451 §

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TINA young attractive 27yr old single female looking for older friendly loving male for adult fun and good times. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 397563

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JENNY blonde eyed cuddly independent female, loves countryside, animals, cooking, WLTm older male to spoil and look after. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 378481

MAUREEN seeks male 32-45 for friendship, maybe more. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 323543 §

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KAREN witty female who loves to laugh, WLTm similar male to share interests, romance, cosy nights in and more. Pls call. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 393125

WIDOW 70, genuine, kind, caring, laidback, seeking male for friendship. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 387013

MANDY 36, size 10, looking for relationship with open-minded man. Status unimportant. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 360317 §

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BLONDE attractive educated lady 50, young minded, seeks professional tall male, 45-55, for friendship, maybe more. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 391818 §

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SINGLE MEN

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CHAT207 To : 65125.
(T&C's below).

MALE 50, genuine, honest, many interests, seeks female for friendship, maybe more. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 394232

MICHAEL 50, nice eyes, seeking female companion for holidays and weekends away, maybe more. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 401479 §

STEVE 60, likes sports, meals out, seeks similar female for permanent relationship. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 401441

STEVE single dad, slim, 45, looking for girl who wants fun times. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 400257 §

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CARING loving, loyal male, seeks younger female for friendship, fun and maybe more.

RICHARD 48, dark hair, brown eyes, olive skin, WLTm lady, 40-50 for LTR, size unimportant. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 401431 §

ATTRACTIVE tall, Indian professional male, GSOH, easygoing, likes sports, socialising, good company, seeks female with GSOH who enjoys life. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 401385

TALL mature, solvent male, seeks to wine and dine younger lady. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 401241

YOUNG 70's male, widower, own transport, active in business, likes weekends away, seeks honest, caring female. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 401203

RICHARD 39, honest, caring, likes cosy nights in/out, seeks lady, 35-40 for good times in and out. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 401145 §

IAN 6ft, likes meals out, weekends away, seeks female, Midlands. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 394134 §

IAN tall, medium build, brown hair, blue eyes, caring, genuine, loving, tender, happy go lucky, likes music, theatre, meals out, romantic nights in, seeks similar female. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 401065 §

DAVE happy go lucky, sociable, seeks attractive young lady, 35-40 to pamper and cook for. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 401043 §

NEW Year new start. Romantic white male, 47, 5ft 11ins, likes holidays, keep fit, music, cinema, seeks female. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 401013

KEITH white male, 49, handsome, 6ft 2ins, seeks buxom black female. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 394094 §

MALE 39, 6ft 2ins, honest, loyal, caring nature, seeks similar female with view to permanent, loving relationship. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 400703 §

FRANK tall, distinguished 68yr old mature, professional gent, sensual, tactile, seeks similar, warm, responsive lady. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 400967

KARL 28, black hair, brown eyes, smart, 5ft 3ins, seeking female for friendship, maybe more. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 400953

PAUL 52, looking for friendship, possible relationship with someone who can make me happy in 2013. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 400849 §

MALE 60, 5ft 10ins, loving, caring, seeking genuine female, any age, 40-60 for relationship. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 400513 §

MALE seeking blonde female, 55-60 for discreet adult fun. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 400435 §

COLIN 62, divorced, many interests, GSOH, seeking slim, attractive, 50's female for companionship, maybe LTR. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 400389 §

MALE 58, good looking, placid, seeks honest, loyal, caring female with view to becoming soul mates. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 400313 §

MALE fun, outgoing, easy-going, seeking female for good times. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 393346 §

COLIN 62, divorced, many interests, GSOH, seeking slim, attractive, 50's female for companionship, maybe LTR. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 400389 §

GARY 46, loyal, genuine, GSOH, down to earth, seeking attractive lady for relationship. South Shrops/North Herefordshire. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 400237

STEVE 49, fed up, seeking female for fun and friendship, possible LTR. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 393218 §

57YR old male, good looking, seeking female for fun times and nights in. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 397463

GARY 39, seeks female, 30-50 for LTR and fun. Single mum welcome. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 398747 §

FRIENDLY guy 49, tall, fit, GSOH, attractive, seeks lady for discreet fun. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 399091 §

TAYLOR 50, tall, athletic, GSOH, WLTm female, attractive, curvy for friendship, maybe more, food, communication, evenings out, travel. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 399067 §

STEVE 54, attractive, seeks older lady, 55-75 for mutual adult fun. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 399755 §

CARL 40, likes DVDs, seeks female for friendship, maybe more. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 393766 §

COVENTRY male, 42, 6ft 1ins, caring, romantic nature, seeks female, single mum welcome, 25-55, any nationality/Foreign for nice times in and out. Genuine replies only. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 398671

BRIAN 60's, intelligent, many interests, loving, affectionate, WLTm West Mids lady for sharing occasional meetings/weekends. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 400115 §

52YR old single parent, 5ft 11ins, slim, likes most things, walks, nights out, cinema, animals, seeks caring, honest, trustworthy female. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 400039 §

BRIAN 73, fit, N/S, own home, likes walks, cycling, meals out, nights in, holidays, travel, seeks genuine, caring female. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 399667

GAY SINGLES

IF YOU'RE LOOKING to meet or chat to other men, look no further. TXT: GAY247 to 65125
www.localgaydate.co.uk

STEVE 54, bi, non scene, seeking guy of similar age or older for fun and friendship. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 401465 §

OLDER male, outgoing, sporty, seeking younger man for fun and friendship, slim-medium build, active, hairy. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 401225 §

CD 70 plus seeking CD 70 plus for friendship. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 393208 §

MALE 34, attractive, 5ft 10ins, blue eyes, blond hair, seeks slim male for friendship. Any area, can travel. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 311892 §

GAY male, 34, slim, toned, seeking older guy for fun, friendship, maybe more. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 395735 §

MALE 44, seeking male, 18-23 for fun relationship. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 391626 §



Women TEXT FOR FUN!

*see t&c's below. No meetings implied or guaranteed. Texts cost £1.50 per message Help Desk: 0844 445 7707

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JULIET, just left Boarding School, mature 18yrs seeking fun chat with guys. Text JPRES 203779 to 66888

SINGLE mum, bored at home, why not chat to me. Text JPRES 204464 to 66888

JANET, Glamorous grannie, v young looking, 58 yrs, would love to chat to you. Text JPRES 204219 to 66888

CALLING all men, Jasmine is at home with the phone in her hand, awaiting your calls, she is 28yrs and is vibrant, attractive and fun loving. Text JPRES 204144 to 66888

JESSICA is a blonde bombshell, just waiting to chat to you. Text JPRES 203858 to 66888

PAULA is a petite black lady with a generous smile and luscious dark hair. Give her a call today. Text JPRES 203671 to 66888

TONI, stuck at home with nothing to do, pick up the phone send her a text. Text JPRES 203946 to 66888

STRONG minded lady, seeks easygoing, gentle type man to boss around! Why not text me. Text JPRES 204182 to 66888

Men TEXT FOR FUN!

*see t&c's below. No meetings implied or guaranteed. Texts cost £1.50 per message Help Desk: 0844 445 7707

GUYS TEXT FOR FUN. SEND JPRES followed by the box number of the person you wish to chat to and send to 66888 (T&C's below)

SINGLE Dad, sincere and caring hopes that a nice single mum wants to chat with him, send texts etc. Text JPRES 204449 to 66888

ROGER is a solvent, business gent, very rich and generous, would love to romance a special lady of any age. Text JPRES 204413 to 66888

JON, Genuine caring man, give him a call and a have a chat. All texts will be returned. Text JPRES 204416 to 66888

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Gethin has Lonsdale target

BOXER Martin Gethin is likely to make the first defence of his British lightweight title in April.

Gethin, who dropped in to the Wednesbury Boxing Academy, Wharfedale Street, with his title belt this week, claimed the vacant crown with a ninth-round stoppage of Ben Murphy at Walsall Town Hall.

And the game Murphy, from Sussex, has now retired after failing to become British champion a second time.

That outcome marked the difference between success and failure – and Gethin has already had proposals for a voluntary defence, to be staged in Birmingham during April, put to him.

by Craig Birch

The 29-year-old from Walsall has set his sights on winning a Lonsdale belt outright – but to do so must defend his championship successfully three times.

He said: "I want to do that and then move on from there. I want to get as much out of boxing as I can and that means more titles, like the European."

"To have a Lonsdale belt on my mantlepiece for the rest of my life would be special, I wouldn't be able to wait to get up every day and look at it!"

"People are starting to recognise me

now. When I start to beat the other British title contenders, they will recognise me even more."

Murphy's last appearance saw him show true sportsmanship, despite his obvious disappointment at the result.

Gethin was so elated at winning the title in front of his friends and family that he did not even notice his opponent's warm applause at the final bell.

He said: "I always believed I could win but I didn't think it would be by stoppage. I knew how strong he was and I had full respect for him and still have as a fighter. I didn't actually realise how he reacted until afterwards. It was nice of him to clap."



Martin Gethin with belt at Wednesbury Boxing Academy

Chance still on to join runners



THERE'S still time to enter the Action Heart five-mile run.

It is the 23rd year that the event has taken place and it starts and finishes at Russells Hall Hospital, Dudley.

Runners get under way at 9.30am on Sunday, February 24.

Entry forms can be downloaded at www.actionheartrunning.com

You can also enter online by visiting the website www.runbritain.co.uk and searching for the event.

Action Heart will be offering attractive incentives for sponsorship raised so do get busy with your sponsorship forms.

Anyone collecting £50-plus qualifies for an adidas sweatshirt while bringing in more than £100 lands a pair of adidas running shoes.

Support

Members of the public are advised that there will inevitably be some traffic hold-ups near the hospital as the runners go around the course.

Action Heart would like to say a big thank you to the local community for their continued support.

It's now week five in the training schedule and the programme is now demanding some sustained effort.

However, if you have been building up gradually this will not be a problem.

If it becomes too tough, you can walk the rest of the way rather than give up.

The important thing is to finish each session so that on the race day you can go the distance and complete the five-mile course.

For those beginners who have already entered the run, we hope that you are finding the training schedule useful.

A word of warning to all you runners and joggers out there: Please do remember the importance of warming up those muscles before going out for your run, particularly on cold mornings or evenings.

Training: Week five

Monday: Rest
Tuesday: Two-mile jog
Wednesday: Three-mile run
Thursday: Rest
Friday: Three-mile jog
Saturday: Rest
Sunday: Four-mile jog/run



Colin Downey finds the going deep at Stafford

Going is grim for runners

MEMBERS of Stourbridge Running Club put their best foot forward in the Midlands Cross-country Championships despite grim going.

Freezing conditions, snow and mud greeted competitors at Stafford Common.

First lady home for Stourbridge was Joan Clarke, in a time of 35min 11sec.

Second was Natalie Dellar, exactly four minutes behind while Ruby Ooi was third in 56:28.

Pete Walters clocked 47:02 to be first man back for Stourbridge and their second runner home was Colin Downey, who stopped the watch at 57:31.

It's defeat without all Kings men

Solihull Blossomfield 4 Kingswinford 2

KINGSWINFORD men's hockey team were left to rue the unavailability of five first-team players. They led 2-0 on Sunday, but could not stave off defeat.

Kings started brightly with second-teamers Damon Johal, Sunny Uppal, Tarran Singh, Pari Sangha and Dulla Sandhu gelling well with their team-mates.

The visitors went two up inside 15 minutes. The first goal was a superb solo effort by Ajay Sandhu, who twisted and turned three defenders and the goalkeeper before a spectacular diving finish.

Minutes later, Kam Mann intercepted a pass to feed Cole Hickman for an easy finish. But Solihull fought back to take the win.

ASHLEY MORRIS is ready to handle the pressure of leading Dudley Heathens into action this year.

Morris takes over the captaincy of the former Cradley club following the departure of Adam Roynon.

The 18-year-old was handed the No.1 race jacket by the outgoing skipper at a club function.

He knows how tough it's going to be as he doubles up with Premier League Workington – and he's up for the challenge.

He said: "I'm happy to be back. Obviously it's going to be a big year for me with Workington and Dudley, where I am No.1 and captain. I'm really looking forward to it and I just can't wait for the season to start now."

"I normally manage to deal with pressure reasonably well. I know being No.1 and captain will be some more pressure, but I'll just carry on as usual and it should be OK."

"I just want to keep the lads' spirits high all the way through the season and score good points."

"If I'm doing that then that's all that counts, really."

Joined

"It will spur me on, obviously, having some guys like Lewis Blackbird chasing me for my top spot. It will be a challenge but I'm definitely planning on keeping that spot for the whole season!"

Morris will be joined by Dan Greenwood, Gareth Isherwood, Paul Starke, Lewis Blackbird, Max Clegg and Nathan Greaves.

Only Morris and Greenwood are survivors from the

Dudley Heathens

rampant 2012 team that had to be decimated due to the team-building points ceiling, but the captain is confident they can go one better and lift the title.

"It looks like it will be a good team," he said. "Hopefully we will have a good team atmosphere like we had last year, and if we have that then I think that can be the key."

"I'll give the youngsters as much help as I can as well. Obviously I was where they are only a couple of years ago, so I'd like to think I can help them to do well. They look like they've got good potential."

Tickets are on sale for the season launch party at Cradley Heath Liberal Club on Friday, March 1. All the riders will be presented with their race jackets.

The event also includes a raffle and auction. Tickets cost £3 HSSC members and £5 non-members and are available online at dudleyheathens.co or by calling HSSC on 07766 745681. The money goes to the riders.

Ladies get kitted up as date set for their big day



Halesowen Town Ladies are keen to get back on the pitch after losing games to the recent spell of bad weather

HALESOWEN TOWN LADIES are poised to get their big County Cup clash with Sporting Club Albion Ladies under way at last.

The game against Sporting – West Bromwich Albion's women's side – initially fell victim to the weather.

But the fixture has now been rearranged for the evening of Wednesday, February 6 at The Grove. And they should look the part as Halesowen Town sponsors, The Big Pet Store, have stepped in to buy them new kit as well as for Colts teams at under-eight and under-nine level.

Participation mentor Sarah Titmus said: "Halesowen Town FC have spent a considerable amount of time working with Halesowen Town Colts to rebuild the relationship between the two clubs."

"Halesowen Town FC would like to thank both Halesowen Town Colts and The Big Pet Store for their continued support and we hope that the relationships that have been built will continue to grow over the coming seasons."

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"Halesowen Town FC would like to thank both Halesowen Town Colts and The Big Pet Store for their continued support and we hope that the relationships that have been built will continue to grow over the coming seasons."

"Halesowen Town FC have spent a considerable amount of time working with Halesowen Town Colts to rebuild the relationship between the two clubs."

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SPORT

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On the ball
Yeltz women set for
biggest game yet
Page 39



Pressure on
But I'm ready, says
Heathens skipper
Page 39

e-mail: chronsport@expressandstar.co.uk

Rowe scents a place for Gornal in next round

GORNAL manager Ian Rowe today challenged his players to fly out of the traps in the FA Vase on Saturday after their fourth-round preparations went to the dogs.

The Peacocks squad were due at Monmore Green greyhound track in Wolverhampton this evening for a team night out as part of the build-up to the re-arranged clash with Wisbech at Garden Walk.

And Rowe hopes a night on the town can help his side sniff out a place in the last 16 on Saturday and an overnight trip to Bodmin seven days later.

Rowe, whose side were due to play

FA Vase

Alvechurch on Tuesday, said: "There will be a bit of rust in the players because we have had a few games called off.

"But hopefully we can start quickly and get ourselves a place in the next round.

"We did well in the FA Cup and we've had a good run in the Vase, so there is nothing to fear.

"We know Wisbech are one of the big-hitters in their league and we are expecting a tough game, but there is no pressure on us.

"We've done really well to get this far - but it would be great to keep it going."

Gornal's game against Wisbech has been postponed twice because of the recent cold snap but they are hopeful of the tie finally getting the go-ahead this week, barring heavy rain in the next 48 hours.

Meanwhile, fellow Vase fourth-rounders Walsall Wood are taking inspiration from the FA Cup giant-killings.

Wood host Hanworth Villa in the fourth round of the FA Vase on Saturday having already gone further than ever before in the competition.

They beat Wigan Robin Park 2-0 in the last round and club secretary Bill Shaw said the team will draw strength from the FA

Cup shocks provided by Luton, Oldham and Leeds. He said: "Hanworth are a level higher in the pyramid and they should be favourites, but you never know what could happen in the cup competitions - look what happened at the weekend.

"We are playing very well at the moment - for what games we've played - and we've only lost once in the league this season.

"The league is the priority, but who doesn't want to get to Wembley?"

The winners face Rochester or Runcorn Town in the fifth round next Saturday and will bank £2,000 - on top of the £4,800 they have already won.

The wind is taken out of title hope

DAMIEN BLACKBURN was halted in the last round by a telling blow in the West Midlands final of the ABA Schoolboys competition, writes Craig Birch.

The Wednesday ABC fighter took a shot bang on the sternum which took all the wind out of him and he failed to recover in time to avoid the stoppage.

The 60kg contest took place in Class One - for boxers born in 2000 - at the Donnington Sports & Social Club in Shropshire last Sunday afternoon.

Blackburn was in with Adam Smith, from Capitol ABC, Coventry, and had fared well in the first two rounds until the fight-ending punch came along.

Feet

With the scores close, Blackburn tried to pile the pressure on and his attempts to come forward left him open to a body shot, but he stayed on his feet.

The referee pulled him out for his own safety and handed Blackburn, 12, his first defeat in his fourth fight as an amateur, but his first in the competition.

The Willenhall Comprehensive student had received byes through to the area title decider but gave it a good go in a tight contest.

The Sandwell area will still be represented by club-mate Jack Bennett and Liam Gould, of William Perry ABC, Tipton, when the national stages begin.

Both walked over with no opponent to box at 57kg.

Bennett was in Class Two, for boxers born in 1999, and Gould in Class Three, for fighters born one year earlier.

The Chronicle, a Midland News Association Ltd publication, printed by the company at Kettleby, Telford, Thursday, January 31, 2013.

CLARKE CALM OVER ODEMWINGIE SAGA

BOSS Steve Clarke insists Peter Odemwingie's bust-up with Albion will not derail the club's Premier League season.

Clarke admitted the Baggies have discussed potential replacements for the Nigeria international who has been pursued by Queens Park Rangers.

But the Hawthorns head coach reiterated he wants the want-away forward to stay and claimed "there is a way back" despite the player's Twitter outbursts against the club and fans in the wake of his rejected transfer request.

Odemwingie upset fans with derogatory tweets that are also believed to have angered some team-mates, but Clarke is adamant he can keep his side on course in the wake of the saga.

That applies whether the player stays or goes - the deadline is 11pm tonight.

"My group are too strong to be destabilised," said Clarke.

"They're too strong and too experienced and they know the ropes.

"I'm sure the players are disappointed in him, but that's normal.

Disrupt

"You would have to be disappointed with some of the comments.

"But there can always be a way back.

"I haven't sat down with the squad and discussed the situation, because we have to see what the resolution is.

"At the moment there is no real indication whether they are with, against or whatever.

"It does disrupt things, but this is a challenge for me. This is my first job and it's the first time I've come across anything like this, but I will find a way to deal with it."

Clarke ruled out a Twitter ban for Odemwingie, who missed last night's sched-

by Steve Madeley

uled Premier League game at Everton after sitting out training for three days following complications with his new-born son, who was finally allowed home late on Monday.

The Scot said the ball was "in QPR's court" after the Londoners had £2m and £3m bids rejected - and admitted it would be difficult to replace the player so late in the transfer window.

Meanwhile, cult hero Darren Moore has left The Hawthorns to join former team-mate Michael Appleton at Blackburn.

The ex-Baggies centre-back, who returned to the club last summer to work with the youth team, has been appointed Rovers' new first-team coach.

Appleton is reshaping his backroom staff at Ewood Park after leaving Blackpool to replace Henning Berg in charge of the former Premier League champions.

Moore, who will work alongside Appleton and assistant Ashley Westwood at Rovers, became a fans' favourite at The Hawthorns during four-and-a-half years as a player and returned last year after hanging up his boots.

Yeltz are now raring to go after the snow



Halesowen Town have emerged from the snow ready to resume their Evo-Stik First Division South campaign. The Yeltz prepared for Saturday's trip to Loughborough Dynamo (3pm) by hosting a friendly against AFC Wulfrunians at The Grove on Tuesday. Michael Thompson is pictured scoring as Halesowen ran out 3-2 winners.

Truman's tilt at title after long lay-off

CHRIS TRUMAN is hoping to put a nightmare 2012 behind him and become British Masters Champion, writes Daniel Mole.

The Erdington-born light-welterweight (8-3-1) fought just twice last year, losing to Lenny Daws and Dave Ryan.

He was due to tackle Ashley Theopane on the undercard of Ricky Hatton's ill-fated comeback in November but, after the Hitman's surprise defeat, the rest of the show was cancelled.

The decision left Truman and Theopane, who were warming up for their fight, with no other choice but to pack up and go home.

It was a bitter pill to swallow and capped a miserable year for the former Amateur ABC ace but now he is ready to make up for lost time when he faces Amir Unsworth (13-6-1) at the North Kesteven Centre, Lincoln, on March 2 for the vacant British Masters light-welterweight crown.

"It's a good title to have," said 28-year-old Truman. "For both of us, it's a stepping stone to bigger things.

"It seems like a long time since I was last in the ring. It has been really frustrating to be honest, not fighting.

"The Theopane fight was a real farce but I've stayed focused throughout. I keep myself in good shape and have been sparring, so I'll be ready."

Finally, it's Christmas

NEW Birmingham speedway asset Ben Barker gets his season under way a week tomorrow at Somerset.

Barker is among the field for the twice-postponed Christmas Cracker individual event. Other Midlands riders taking part include Dudley's Ashley Morris and Jacob Thorsell of Wolves.



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